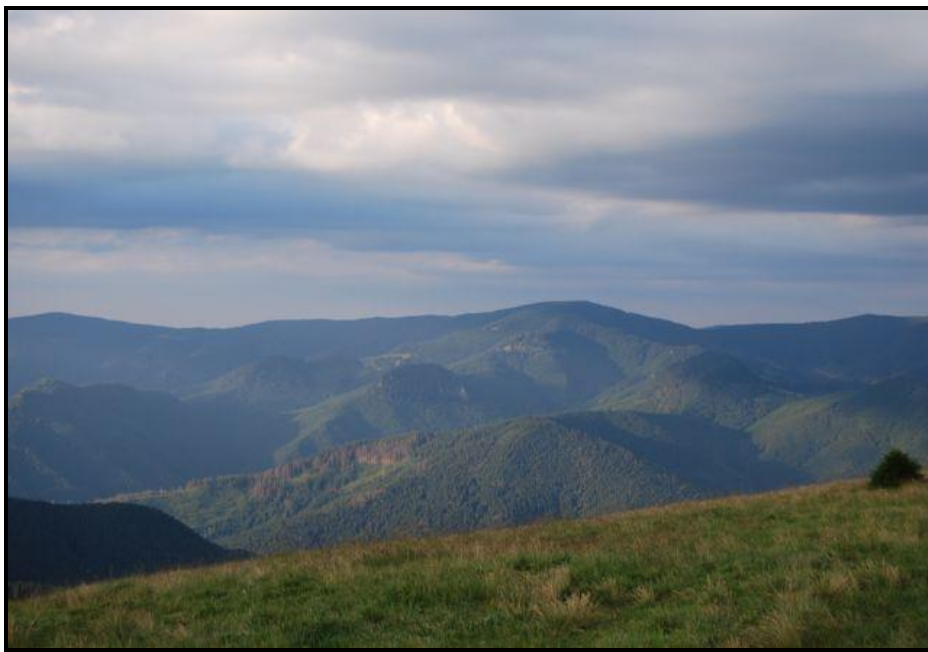


Strengthening Romania's Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in Romania's Maramureș Nature Park

Romania

IA: United Nations Development Programme

EA: Romanian National Forest Administration



**GEF Biodiversity Focal Area
Strategic Objective BD-1 / Operational Program 4
Medium-sized Project (MSP)**

**GEF ID: 1679
UNDP Atlas ID: 00041462 / UNDP PMIS: 1969**

Terminal Evaluation

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I. Executive Summary

1. The project “Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-[Non-governmental Organization (NGO)] Partnership in Romania’s Maramureş Nature Park” was implemented with \$1 million in Global Environment Facility (GEF) financing and \$1.33 in expected co-financing. Implementation was planned for 36 months; this was extended to 52 months (July 2005 – October 2009). The project objective was “The biodiversity of Maramureş Mountains Natural Park [(MMNP)] in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model.” The project’s three expected outcomes were:

- **Outcome 1:** Stakeholders make MMNP fully operational;
- **Outcome 2:** Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramureş;
- **Outcome 3:** Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.

2. The protected area was designated and gazetted leading up to project implementation, and received national approval at approximately the same time the project received GEF approval. MMNP is a category VI protected area, covering 133,354 hectares. The MMNP core protection zone is 18,769 ha (14.1%), the sustainable management zone (buffer zone) is 79,585 ha (59.7%) and the sustainable development zone is 35,000 ha (26.2%). Approximately 90,000 people live in the protected landscape area, which includes ten communes. Romania’s National Forest Agency (NFA), which is responsible for managing the majority of Romania’s protected areas, executed the project.

3. This terminal evaluation was conducted as required by, and in coherence with, GEF and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) monitoring and evaluation procedures using a participatory mixed-methods approach. The evaluation assesses the actual performance and results of the MMNP project against the planned project activities and outputs, at the national and local levels based on the relevant evaluation criteria. Project results are assessed based on the expected outcomes and objectives, as well as any unanticipated results. United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards were followed throughout the evaluation.

4. The MMNP project **relevance** is satisfactory with respect to Romanian national environmental and development priorities, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Carpathian Convention, and GEF biodiversity focal area strategies and priorities. There are multiple Romanian government policy documents supported by the project objective, including Romania’s National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), and the Romanian Rural Development Strategy for 2007 – 2013. The project supports the implementation of the CBD and the Carpathian Convention in Romania. By operationalizing the MMNP protected area through an effective management regime and mainstreaming biodiversity considerations in economic development in Maramureş county, the MMNP project is relevant to both the operational strategy of the GEF, and the strategic objectives of the biodiversity focal area.

5. MMNP project **efficiency** is rated highly satisfactory. The project was implemented in a highly cost-effective manner, and the project results achieved are commensurate with (or exceed) the level of investment from the GEF and co-financing partners. Financial management and reporting were carried out with a high degree of professionalism and responsibility.

Procurement was conducted without problem. The project succeeded in leveraging additional funds following project approval, and the park administration team has developed the capacity to apply for and access new financing sources available from the European Union (EU).

6. MMNP project **effectiveness** is rated highly satisfactory. **Outcome 1:** In the period of four years the protected area has gone from being newly gazetted and existing only on paper, to having a fully functioning administrative unit, a comprehensive management plan agreed with all stakeholders, and working partnerships with regional and local government institutions in implementing and enforcing the park management plan. The number of hectares under strict conservation management is 18,769 compared to an initial target of 7,800. Looking at the METT indicator, the park went from a baseline score of 19 in 2005, to a score of 70 in 2009. MMNP is considered by the NFA to be one of Romania's leading protected areas in terms of the level and quality of management.

7. The protected area management team is now seen as a respected and valuable partner in the ongoing regional development process. The level of trust and confidence the park management receives from all stakeholders is a product of transparency, public outreach, and excellent communication – the hallmarks of the Maramureş project.

8. **Outcome 2:** The project has succeeded in mainstreaming park management and biodiversity considerations into local development and economic investment procedures by establishing the park zoning, which is agreed by all stakeholders. There are two important mechanisms through which mainstreaming actually occurs: First, through incorporation of park input into the development permitting system, and second, by the inclusion of the park administration on the county technical committee that determines which proposed investments require environmental impact assessments.

9. **Outcome 3:** There were multiple significant achievements under this outcome, including excellent progress in reducing the impact of sawdust waste on riparian ecosystems, and the high quality Total Economic Value (TEV) study supported by the project. At the same time, there remains great potential for further progress in this area. As identified in the TEV study there are multiple as-yet-unexploited possibilities for local communities to reap benefits from the region's natural capital. It must also be noted that due to factors fully outside the control of the project, the originally envisaged progress by NFA toward forest certification was not realized.

10. The **sustainability** of project results is considered likely, with financial sustainability rated highly likely. There are a number of low-level risks that the park administration will need to effectively manage and continue monitoring, but none of these are considered significant threats at present.

11. **MMNP Project Lesson:** To effectively mainstream biodiversity concerns at the regional or local level, there needs to be a mechanism by which the primary actor (project manager, park director, etc.) can interact on a regular basis with key stakeholders to develop effective relationships. The mechanism can take multiple forms, and should be sustainable once a project has finished. By building key relationships with stakeholders through such a mechanism, protagonists can work to incorporate biodiversity concerns into development procedures.

12. **MMNP Project Lesson:** The two mechanisms for strengthening environmental governance highlighted under Outcome 2 provide excellent concrete examples of practical ways in which biodiversity considerations can be mainstreamed in economic development processes. In the first instance, notification of the potential requirement of park approval has been incorporated in the first step for permitting of any infrastructure investment. In the second mechanism, the park administration has been incorporated at the county level technical commission responsible for determining the necessity for environmental impact assessments for proposed developments.
13. **MMNP Project Lesson:** The MMNP scientific council, consisting of highly technically qualified individuals, plays an important role in park administration. The separation of the scientific council from the park administration facilitates “unbiased” and transparent park management decision-making based on solid technical grounds. At the same time, this structure provides the park administration with an institutional buffer for potential stakeholder backlash to any particular decision.
14. **Key Recommendation:** The park administration and involved stakeholders should work to reduce the potential for single points of failure in the park management regime. For example, MMNP should hire an assistant park manager or train current staff to support this role in a practical manner. Specific attention should go toward the building of relationships between all park staff and regional and local government officials relevant to successful park management and administration.
15. **Key Recommendation:** MMNP should place a priority on increasing capacity to collect and manage environmental monitoring data, with the ultimate objective of implementing a regular comprehensive and cost-effective monitoring system. Relatively current, quality data is critical for effective management in the long-term. The well-qualified staff currently in place to manage such a program should be further supported in this role. Examples of cost-effective community-based monitoring techniques include examples such as community-based water quality monitoring, and an annual or bi-annual community bird species counting event.
16. **Key Recommendation:** With the goal of supporting a cost-effective environmental monitoring system, MMNP should explore the feasibility and utility of community-based water-monitoring programs (e.g. waterkeeper programs, adopt-a-stream, etc.). Such programs also help increase community awareness and can be integrated with environmental education programs.
17. **Key Recommendation:** Throughout the new EU member countries, regional branding has begun to show potential value, as has been demonstrated in western European countries. With the goal of creating incentives for nature protection and realizing value in natural capital, MMNP should explore the possibility of partnering with local producer groups and tourism organizations to develop a regional trademark or ecolabel for Maramureş. This could be done for both products and tourism services. Relevant examples include the regional brand developed for Poland’s Barycz Valley protected landscape (<http://barycz.pl/main/>) and the regional brands in the Czech Republic’s Carpathian protected landscapes of Beskedy and Bílé Karpaty (<http://www.tradicebk.cz> and <http://www.domaci-vyroby.cz>).

Summary Project Ratings

| Project Component or Objective | Rating |
|---|--------|
| Project Formulation | |
| Relevance | S |
| Conceptualization/design | S |
| Stakeholder participation | HS |
| Project Implementation | |
| Implementation Approach (Efficiency) | HS |
| The use of the logical framework | S |
| Adaptive management | HS |
| Use/establishment of information technologies | MS |
| Operational relationships between the institutions involved | HS |
| Technical capacities | S |
| Monitoring and Evaluation | S |
| Stakeholder Participation | HS |
| Production and dissemination of information | S |
| Local resource users and NGOs participation | HS |
| Establishment of partnerships | S |
| Involvement and support of governmental institutions | HS |
| Project Results | |
| Overall Achievement of Objective and Outcomes (Effectiveness) | HS |
| Objective: Biodiversity of MMNP is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model | S |
| Outcome 1: Stakeholders make MMNP fully operational | HS |
| Outcome 2: Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramureş | HS |
| Outcome 3: Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP | MS |
| Sustainability | L |
| Financial sustainability | HL |
| Institutional sustainability | L |
| Socio-economic sustainability | L |
| Ecological sustainability | L |
| Overall Project Achievement and Impact | HS |

II. Introduction

A. Evaluation Scope and Methodology

18. According to GEF evaluation policies, all GEF funded projects must undergo a terminal evaluation. Thus, this evaluation was initiated by UNDP, to follow the close of the MMNP project. This terminal evaluation seeks to assess the actual performance and results of the MMNP project against the planned project activities and outputs, at the national and local levels based on the relevant evaluation criteria. The evaluation assesses project results based on the expected outcomes and objectives, as well as any unanticipated results. The evaluation will identify relevant lessons for other similar future projects in the future in Romania and elsewhere, and will provide recommendations as necessary and appropriate.

19. The evaluation focuses on the four-year project implementation period, but includes an assessment of project design, and provides recommendations related to the project's post-implementation period. The evaluation Terms of Reference did not specifically include key evaluation questions, but the following key questions were developed based on the project objectives, to guide the overall scope and framework of the evaluation:

- To what extent have stakeholders made MMNP fully operational?
- To what extent have stakeholders strengthened environmental governance across Maramureş?
- How and to what extent have stakeholders recognized and begun to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP?
- What has been the project's expected and actual contribution to the achievement of the objectives?

20. In addition to answering these key questions, the evaluation provides the required ratings on key elements of project design and implementation. Further, the evaluation will, when possible and relevant, assess the project in the context of the key GEF operational principles, as summarized in Annex 3.

21. The evaluation methodology was based on a participatory mixed-methods approach, which included three primary elements: a) a desk review of relevant project documentation and other documents;¹ b) interviews with key project participants and stakeholders; and c) a field visit to the project site.

22. The primary limitation faced by the evaluation was that, understandably, some documents were available only in Romanian. Secondly, with additional time, more stakeholder viewpoints and relevant data could have been gathered. However, these issues were not significant for this evaluation, and the evaluation is believed to represent a fair and accurate assessment of the project.

23. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with UNDP and GEF monitoring and evaluation policies and procedures, and in-line with United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards. The intended users of this terminal evaluation are the GEF Evaluation Office,

¹ Inputs included internal project documents such as quarterly progress reports, PIRs, mid-term evaluation, etc. Documents referenced in this report other than the internal project documents are cited in footnotes.

UNDP, project participants, and others who may find the lessons and experienced documented herein useful in the context of other projects.

III. Development Context and Project Background

A. Development Context

24. Maramureş County sits on the northern edge of Romania, bordering Ukraine, and encompasses the northern most portion of the Carpathian mountains in Romania. MMNP covers an area of approximately 133,354 ha, which is approximately 22% of the county's area. With MMNP located in the northern portion of Maramureş County, the northern and northeastern portion of the protected area boundary is made up by the national boundary with Ukraine; the Vişeu River primarily marks the southern boundary. Elevation in the protected area ranges from 340 to 1957m. There is one primary road along the southern border of the park, but multiple access points along this road make it impossible to fully control park access at a single or few points. The protected area as a whole is an IUCN category VI protected area (see Box 1), while the internal park zoning includes areas at other IUCN category levels. The MMNP core protection zone is 18,769 ha (14.1%), the sustainable management zone (buffer zone) is 79,585 ha (59.7%) and the sustainable development zone is 35,000 ha (26.2%).

Box 1 IUCN Category VI Definition

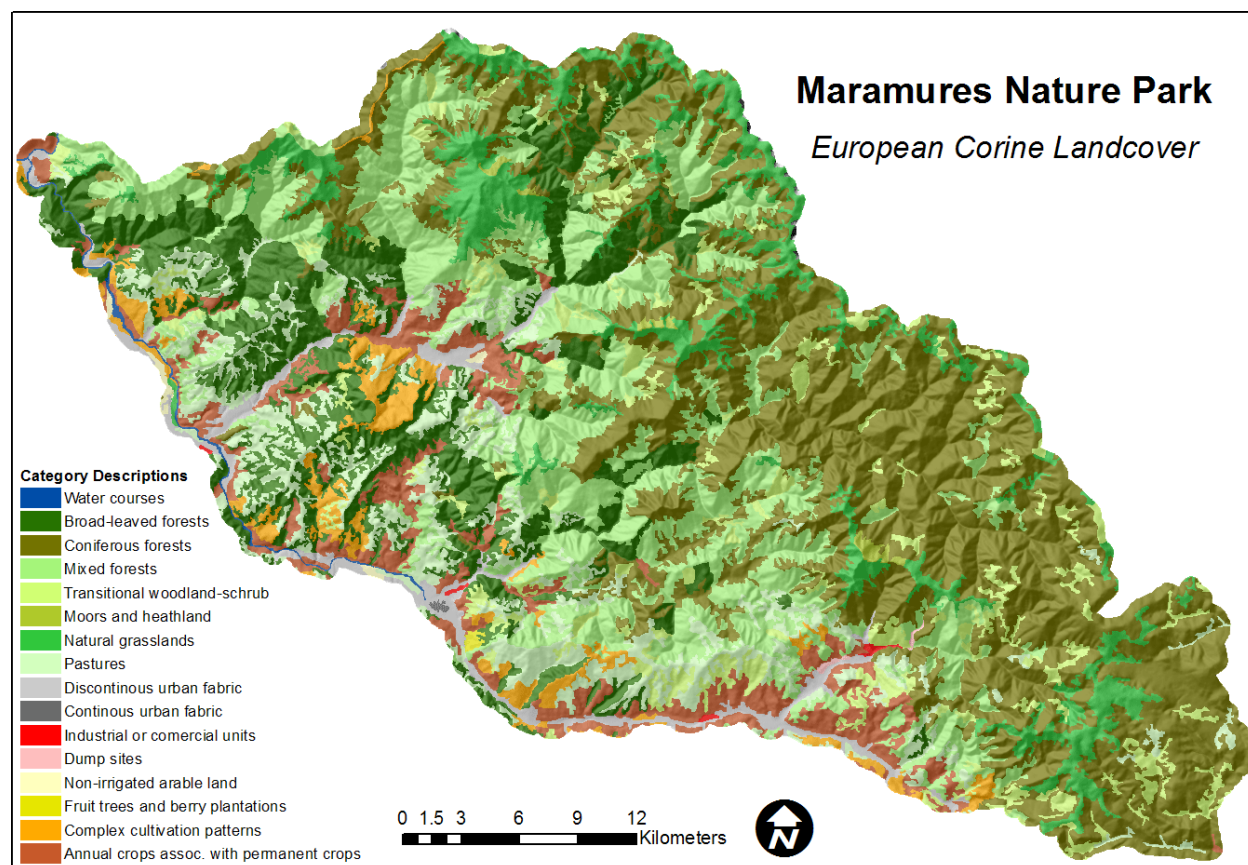
Category VI protected areas conserve ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large, with most of the area in a natural condition, where a proportion is under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial use of natural resources compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims of the area.

(Source: Dudley, N. (Editor) (2008). *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 86pp.)

25. Land tenure is an important issue in MMNP due to various issues surrounding the national land-restitution process, and the project's initial plans for certification of forest areas. In contrast to the "American-style" national park model replicated in many parts of the world, Romania's national government does not own the majority of land within the MMNP boundaries (partly signified by its status as a "natural" park rather than "national" park). The revised MMNP management plan identifies the following breakdown in land tenure, as of November 2008: State forest 41.6%, independent private owners 36.2%, local public administration 12.9%, associations of private owners 8.9%, and other legal entities with less than 1%. It is estimated that once the land restitution process has fully played out, State forest ownership in MMNP will be approximately 30%. Project issues related to the land restitution process are discussed in Section V.A.

26. Approximately 4% of the park area is agricultural land, with the remaining area consisting of various ecosystem types including broad-leafed forests, coniferous forests, and natural grasslands and pastures. Figure 1 below shows a map of MMNP with European CORINE land cover data, which outlines the types and extent of ecosystems and other land uses in the protected area.

Figure 1 Maramureş Mountains Nature Park Ecosystem Landcover²



27. Within the MMNP area 1449 plant species have been identified, representing 24% of the species identified in Romania. The species richness includes 90 endemic species and 101 species included on the IUCN Red List. Also in the area are 196 identified species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, of which a large number are endemic and protected under multiple conventions and agreements.

28. MMNP includes ten communes, with approximately 90,000 inhabitants. The region has historically been isolated due to its remote location and the fact that it is a border area, which has helped the MMNP ecosystem remain intact; during the communist era the system of agricultural collectivism was not very successfully implemented Maramureş, which also had positive environmental implications.

29. The main economic activities in the region are mining, forestry, agriculture and woodworking, with increasing economic activity in tourism. The importance of mining has decreased significantly in recent years due to a national government policy to close unprofitable mining operations.³ While potentially beneficial to the environment, this policy has had a negative effect on employment and poverty levels in some areas of MMNP, particularly the communes of Borşa and Baia Borşa.

² Source: MMNP draft management plan.

³ See World Bank. 2009. "Mine Closure Opening New Windows of Opportunity for Romania," July 16, 2009.

30. Another important source of income for people living in the area are reparations sent or brought back by those who have migrated to work in other European countries. This mobility has partially been facilitated by Romania's accession to the EU in 2007, though labor restrictions for Romanian workers remain in place in some EU countries.⁴ Further, the project's PDF-A economic study estimated the emigration of young people from the project area at the rate of 4.8 to 6.6% per year, likely driven by limited economic and educational opportunities; there is no high school level education available in the MMNP communes.

31. A unique aspect of the Maramureş project is the institutional structure in place in Romania to support protected area management. The executing agency for the project was the National Forest Administration, also known as "RomSilva." The NFA is an independent state institution, under the Ministry of Agriculture. The NFA is responsible for managing Romania's public forestland, including harvesting and selling timber, which provides the agency's budget. According to information in the mid-term evaluation, it is estimated that the NFA contributes about 3% of Romania's GDP. As stated in the project document, "the NFA has a long and notable history of rigorous forest management, and on the whole, national forest management in Romania has been relatively well funded and administered for many decades."

32. The NFA has a ten-year contract, through 2014, with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) to manage 22 of Romania's 26 national-level protected areas (national and natural parks). The current overall institutional structure is represented in Figure 2, below. The NFA is responsible for the budget and management of the individual protected areas under this contract. According to NFA sources, the contracted annual budget is approximately \$3 million euros. Within the past year there have been some changes and proposed changes to the protected area institutional structure in Romania, which are discussed in Sections V.B.i and VI.A.iii.

Figure 2 Romanian PA Institutional Oversight Structure

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⁴ BBC News. 2009. "European Free Movement of Labor Map," April 17, 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/3513889.stm>.

33. Also important for understanding the Maramureş project is the international economic and political context, and the macro-level issues that will be faced in coming years. The most important element is Romania's accession to the EU on January 1, 2007, which brought new funding opportunities for environmental conservation, but also new requirements. For example, Romania was required to designate its Natura 2000 and other protected sites, but has not consistently met its environmental obligations to the EU.⁵ At the same time, EU Sectoral Operational Programme funding for the environment in Romania is 157 million euros from 2007-2013, with an additional approximately 63 million euros in matching funds from the Romanian government. Of this, the NFA will allocate 60-70 million euros in support of biodiversity conservation, such as through infrastructure for protected areas.

34. Another key issue of Romania's EU accession is that the northern border of MMNP with Ukraine now represents an EU/non-EU border control area. There is currently not an official border control point within the park, but proposals are under way for an EU border crossing in MMNP north of the commune of Bistra, where the Vişeu River meets the Tisza River.

35. The current economic crisis has negatively affected Romania, and national budgets are being cut for many issues, including environmental conservation. In particular, NFA revenues from forestry operations have declined. In addition, in November 2008 elections the Social Democratic Party edged out the incumbent Democrat-Liberal Party, creating turnover in many government institutions. As discussed in Section VI.A on sustainability, government restructuring and limited financial resources have long-term implications for institutional arrangements for protected area management in Romania.

B. Project Background

36. As with many GEF projects, the Maramureş project's history is much longer than the actual implementation period. Through the late 1990s various stakeholders in the region, headed by the NGO the Ecological Society of Maramureş (See Box 2 for information on this NGO), became increasingly active in biodiversity conservation in Maramureş. Involved stakeholders included the Maramureş office of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Maramureş County Council. According to individuals involved with the early stages of the project, the first project concept note was developed in 1999. In 2000 the stakeholders formed the Maramureş biodiversity consortium, consisting of the County Prefect, the President of the County Council, the Chief

Box 2 Ecological Society of Maramureş

The Ecological Society of Maramureş was established in 1991, with a mandate to conserve biodiversity through environmental education. It has a core membership of about 20 members, mostly in the education sector such as professors and teachers. An extended membership of around 80 individuals includes representatives from the community at large. The NGO has three ecological clubs in local schools and is funded through sponsorships and participation in donor-funded projects. (Source: Mid-term Evaluation)

⁵ In 2007, for example, the EC commission took action against Romania for failing to designate any Special Protected Areas for migratory and vulnerable birds (Europa. 2007. "Nature protection: Commission takes legal action against Romania for infringement of biodiversity legislation." Press Release.)

Inspector of the county EPA, the Director of the Forestry Administration in the area, the President of the NGO Ecological Society of Maramureş, and the Director of the Water Systems Management Administration. This consortium formed the foundation for the establishment of MMNP, and provided the launching pad for further development of the project through significant local and county stakeholder support. The Ecological Society of Maramureş partnered with UNDP to secure the PDF-A funding, which was approved in 2002.

37. The MMNP was established through local and national lobbying efforts by project stakeholders, and supported through the PDF-A activities. The park was formally established by county and national level legislation: Maramureş County Council Decision no. 27/18.03.2003 regarding the establishment of the Maramureş Mountains Natural Park, and Governmental Decision 2151/2004 regarding the designation as natural protected area for new areas. The park was gazetted in November 2005.

IV. Project Design and Implementation

A. Project Concept and Design

38. The main threats addressed by the project were habitat fragmentation, aquatic habitat degradation, direct exploitation of wildlife and non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and uncontrolled tourism development. According to the project document, the project's overall goal was "Strengthening Romania's national system of protected areas by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramureş demonstration of an effective protected area model." The project objective was ***"The biodiversity of Maramureş Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model."***

39. The project was executed by the NFA, and implementation began in June 2005. The project was funded as a GEF Medium-sized Project (MSP), with \$0.975 million in GEF funding, and an estimated co-financing of \$1.36 million from various sources, for a total cost of \$2.34 million (plus \$0.025 in GEF PDF-A funding). Table 4 in Section IV.B shows a complete breakdown of expected and actual project co-financing.

40. The project was originally planned for 36 months, but within the first year it was apparent that the planned project activities for the first year were too ambitious, and an extension of one year was requested at the end of the first year of implementation. As noted in the 2006 Project Implementation Report (PIR), "In planning the first year's work 12 months ago, we have discovered that we were overly optimistic regarding what could be completed during the first 12 month period and so we have re-scheduled activities and budgets accordingly." An additional no-cost extension was requested from June 30 to October 31, 2009 at the end of the project to allow for the completion of the final activities. Table 1 shows key project dates.

Table 1 MMNP Project Key Dates

| Milestone | Expected date | Actual date |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| PDF-A Approval | n/a | February 12, 2002 |
| CEO endorsement/approval | | March 2, 2005 |
| Agency approval date | n/a | May 27, 2005 |
| Implementation start (first disbursement) | n/a | June 28, 2005 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Mid-term evaluation | December 2006 | August 31, 2007 |
| Project completion | June 30, 2008 | October 31, 2009 |
| Terminal evaluation completion | January-February 2009 | October 2009 |
| Project closing | June 30, 2008 | December 31, 2009 |

41. Three outcomes were planned to support the overall objective:

Outcome 1: Stakeholders make MMNP fully operational;

Outcome 2: Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramureş;

Outcome 3: Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.

42. The strategy for MMNP was to implement a natural resource management regime for the protected area that provides the necessary protection for the region's globally significant biodiversity while at the same time supports and allows continued sustainable economic development for the communities within the park area. Because MMNP is a category VI protected area with tens of thousands of people living within its boundaries, project implementation required close cooperation and communication with all stakeholders. As noted in the mid-term evaluation, local municipal governments were not represented in the Maramureş biodiversity consortium, but seven of ten municipalities within the park boundaries signed letters of support for the project prior to project approval.

43. As can be seen from the three desired outcomes for the project, the project strategy was entailed a three-pronged approach. The first outcome was to get the park management structure up and running, including management staff in place with sufficient capacity and a management plan developed in cooperation with stakeholders. Second, due to the human and economic activity in the park area, regional environmental governance needed to be strengthened and biodiversity considerations mainstreamed. The third desired outcome was to develop the framework linking conservation and sustainable use of resources with economic benefits to local stakeholders with multiple approaches, including developing new markets for wood waste, developing an ecotourism strategy, exploring opportunities for payments for ecosystem services, and supporting markets for certified sustainable forest products.

44. Figure 3 below summarizes the overall project intervention logic, retrospectively constructed by this evaluation. The project outputs are designed to contribute to the achievement of anticipated outcomes. Once outcomes are achieved, there is a period of implementation and ongoing management that necessarily occurs in the timeframe beyond the life of the project. From a theory-based evaluative point of view, if the project assumptions remain valid and the project successfully achieves the outcomes, it can be anticipated that the expected impact will eventually be achieved. For GEF projects, it is anticipated that projects will contribute at a scale sufficient to comprise "Global Environmental Benefits." Impacts and the contribution to Global Environmental Benefits by the MMNP project are discussed further in Section VI.D on impacts.

Figure 3 MMNP Project Intervention Logic Chain

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45. One valuable practice employed by the project was to bring the international expert who developed the project on-site for a week during project start-up to help the project team understand the objectives and desired outcomes of the project, and to facilitate work planning for the first year of project implementation.

46. In support of the GEF's operational principle of supporting a catalytic role, the project design incorporated multiple replication targets. The project logframe includes goals for replication in other protected areas in Romania regarding entrance fees, a knowledge network, and training modules.

47. During project development a key decision was made for the project team to be employed by the NFA from the beginning of implementation. This was a critical decision, which led to the primary driver of project sustainability: the MMNP administration staff members are NFA employees, and operational costs are included in under the NFA's annual protected areas budget. This issue is further highlighted in Section VI.A.i on financial risks to sustainability.

i. Relevance to Romanian Development Objectives, International Conventions, and the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area

48. The project's overall objective is "The biodiversity of Maramureş Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model." The MMNP project relevance is satisfactory with respect to Romanian national environmental and development priorities, the CBD and Carpathian Convention, and the GEF biodiversity focal area.

49. There are multiple Romanian government policy documents supported by the project objective. The Romanian National Development Plan for 2004-2006 identified environmental protection as the second national priority. Environmental protection in this context was

defined as including nature conservation and sustainable development, including eco-tourism and sustainable forest resource use. The Romanian Rural Development Strategy for 2007-2013 identifies four “axes” of which the second is “improvement of the environment and rural areas through the sustainable use of agricultural and forestry land.” The second and third objectives of this axis are “Preserve and improve the state of the natural resources and habitats” and “Promote the sustainable management of the forest land.”⁶

50. As part of the EU accession process Romania also had to further specify its environmental priorities. Romania’s Sectoral Operational Programme for the Environment 2007 – 2013 includes as its fourth axis “Implementation of Adequate Management Systems for Nature Protection,” and states:

*Romania has to ensure the establishment of Natura 2000 network, in accordance with Birds and Habitats Directives and to prepare relevant protection measures for sites of community interest. Natura 2000 sites are estimated at about 15% of the national territory. As the future Natura 2000 network and its management will be closely linked to the national protected area network, appropriate management and monitoring system has to be developed and implemented for the entire protected areas network, supported by a well development management infrastructure.*⁷

51. Although, as mentioned previously, Romania continues to struggle with meeting its EU commitments with regard to environmental protection, the MMNP project objectives clearly supports these commitments.

52. Romania ratified the CBD on August 17th, 1994. By becoming a signatory to, and ratifying with Law 58/1994, the CBD, Romania signaled its intention to support the objectives of the convention. Romania elaborated its first NBSAP in 1996, and this was revised in 2000. Romania is currently implementing a GEF-supported project to further revise and update its NBSAP titled “Support to alignment of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan with the Convention on Biological Diversity and development of Clearing House Mechanism.” The 2000 version of Romania’s NBSAP, the version in existence during project development, included nine priority objectives which are supported by the objectives of the MMNP project:

1. *Development of the legislative framework and strengthening the institutional capacity for biological diversity conservation and sustainable use of its components.*
2. *Organisation of the national network of protected areas and ensuring their efficient and adequate management for the natural habitats protection and biological diversity conservation.*
3. *Conservation of threatened, endemic, and/or rare species with a high economic value “in situ” and “ex-situ”.*
4. *The integration of the National Strategy for the Biological Diversity Conservation and Sustainable Use of its Components within the National Strategy, as well as within the departmental and local strategies, plans, programmes and policies for the national and local sustainable development.*

⁶ Government of Romania. 2007. “National Strategy Plan for Rural Development, 2007-2013,” Ministry of Agriculture Forests and Rural Development.

⁷ Government of Romania. 2007. “Sectoral Operational Programme: Environment, 2007 – 2013, Final Version 2007,” Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.

5. *The protection, conservation and restoration of the terrestrial and aquatic biological diversity outside protected areas through (1) reducing the negative impacts of pollution, natural resources overexploitation and inappropriate land-use practices and (2) restoring altered ecosystems and habitats.*
6. *Protection, conservation and restoration of the biological diversity specific to agro-systems through the implementation of the technologies which favour sustainable agriculture.*
7. *Training specialists and the general population in the spirit and techniques of biological diversity conservation and sustainable use of its components.*
8. *Involvement of NGOs and local communities in programmes and actions for biological diversity protection, conservation and restoration.*
9. *Conducting of special research and monitoring programmes for improving the knowledge of the biological diversity status.*⁸

53. The ongoing GEF-supported project highlighted above will bring the NBSAP in closer alignment with the objectives of the convention. As noted in the project document for this project, “the main methodological approach of an update exercise will be to look into the possibilities and entry points for the BSAP integration into the wider development of Romania, such as country’s national strategy as well as local and sectoral strategies, plans, programmes and policies for the country development.”⁹

54. Although further coherence between Romanian national strategies and the CBD is needed, the MMNP project clearly supports implementation of the convention on various issues. Table 2 below shows the articles of the CBD related to the MMNP project; this analysis was conducted by the mid-term evaluation, and has been verified by the terminal evaluation.

Table 2 MMNP Project Support for CBD Implementation (Source: MMNP Mid-term Evaluation)

| CBD Articles | MMNP Project Outcomes | Outcome 1: Stakeholders make fully operational | Outcome 2: Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramureş | Outcome 3: Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Article 1: Objectives | | X | X | X |
| Article 5: Cooperation | | X | | |
| Article 6: General measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use | | X | | X |
| Article 7: Identification and Monitoring | | X | | |
| Article 8: In-situ Conservation | | X | X | X |
| Article 10: Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity | | X | X | X |
| Article 11: Incentive Measures | | | | |
| Article 12: Research and Training | | | X | |
| Article 13: Public Education and Awareness | | X | X | |
| Article 17: Exchange of Information | | X | | |

⁸ Government of Romania. 2000. “Approximation Strategy for the Nature Conservation Sector,” Ministry of Waters, Forests, and Environmental Protection, Directorate of Nature and Biological Diversity Conservation, July 2000.

⁹ See <http://www.gefonline.org/projectDetailsSQL.cfm?projID=3421> (as accessed on September 8, 2009).

55. Romania is party to multiple other international conventions relevant to the MMNP project, including the Ramsar Convention (ratified by Romania in 1991), the Bern Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (ratified in 1993), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (ratified in 1994), and the Bonn Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species (ratified in 1998). Among the most relevant is the Carpathian Convention, signed at the 5th Environment for Europe Conference in May 2003 in Kiev, Ukraine. The objective of the Carpathian Convention is to “pursue a comprehensive policy and cooperate for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians with a view to inter alia improving quality of life, strengthening local economies and communities, and conservation of natural values and cultural heritage.”¹⁰ Table 3 below highlights the relevance of the project to the Carpathian Convention objectives. As with the CBD analysis above, the below analysis was conducted by the mid-term evaluation and verified by this evaluation.

Table 3 MMNP Project Support for Carpathian Convention Implementation (Source: MMNP Mid-term Evaluation)

| MMNP Project Outcomes | Outcome 1: Stakeholders make MMNP fully operational | Outcome 2: Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramureș | Outcome 3: Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital |
|---|---|--|--|
| Carpathian Convention Objectives | | | |
| Article 2: General objectives and principles (a) the precaution and prevention principles, (b) the 'polluter pays' principle, (c) public participation and stakeholder involvement, (d) trans-boundary cooperation, (e) integrated planning and management of land and water resources, (f) a programmatic approach, and (g) the ecosystem approach. | X | | |
| Article 3: Integrated approach to the land resources management | X | | |
| Article 4: Conservation & sustainable use of biological & landscape diversity | X | X | X |
| Article 5: Spatial planning | X | | |
| Article 6: Sustainable and integrated water/river basin management | X | | |
| Article 7: Sustainable agriculture and forestry | X | | |
| Article 8: Sustainable transport and infrastructure | | | |
| Article 9: Sustainable tourism | | | X |
| Article 10: Industry and energy | | | X |
| Article 11: Cultural heritage and traditional knowledge | X | X | |
| Article 12: Environmental assessment information system, monitoring and early warning | | | |
| Article 13: Awareness raising, education and public participation | X | X | |

¹⁰ Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. 2003. “Article 2: General Objectives and Principles,” May 22, 2003, Kiev, Ukraine.

56. Since the GEF is the financial mechanism for the CBD, the GEF's objectives for the biodiversity focal area derive from the CBD, i.e. the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The GEF's original operational strategy identified multiple strategic considerations for the biodiversity focal area, including "integration of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within national and, as appropriate, subregional and regional sustainable development plans and policies" and "helping to protect and sustainably manage ecosystems through targeted and cost-effective interventions."¹¹

57. The GEF's strategic priorities for biodiversity have continued to evolve through each phase of the GEF. The MMNP project was approved during GEF-3 (2003 – 2006), but the strategic priorities for biodiversity for GEF-4 (2007 – 2010) have not changed significantly. The GEF's current strategic objectives in the biodiversity focal area include 1. To catalyze sustainability of protected area systems; and 2. To mainstream biodiversity in production landscapes / seascape and sectors.¹² By operationalizing the MMNP protected area through an effective management regime and mainstreaming biodiversity considerations in economic development in Maramureş county, the MMNP project is relevant to both the operational strategy of the GEF, and the strategic objectives of the biodiversity focal area.

58. Overall, the MMNP project is relevant to Romania's local and national environmental conservation and development priorities, the objectives of the CBD and other conventions such as the Carpathian Convention, and the policies and priorities of the GEF for the biodiversity focal area.

ii. Stakeholder Participation and Country-Drivenness in Design

59. The MMNP project represents an excellent example of country and stakeholder-drivenness. The project concept originated in the region with local stakeholders who took initial steps to catalyze the larger project strategy. As previously discussed, the NGO Ecological Society of Maramureş was a primary driver in this process, and made contact with UNDP to explore the possibility of a larger scale project. The Ecological Society of Maramureş worked with other regional stakeholders to form the Maramureş biodiversity consortium in 2000, the foundation for the MMNP management approach.

60. The local stakeholders' initiative was supported by UNDP Romania in obtaining PDF-A funding to develop the project concept and conduct the preliminary research necessary to construct an effective implementation approach. External consultants were contracted to develop the project document because the technical capacity to develop a "GEF-able" project document was not yet available at the local level, but the work of the external consultants was directly supported by the local stakeholders. The extremely high degree of stakeholder-drivenness throughout the project development process was one of the keys to the project's success in implementation.

¹¹ GEF. 1994. Operational Strategy of the Global Environment Facility.

¹² GEF. 2007. Biodiversity Focal Area Strategy and Strategic Programming for GEF-4. October 2007.

iii. Timeframes from Development to Implementation

61. Like many GEF projects, the MMNP project faced an extended period of time between project design and implementation. The PDF-A was approved in February 2002, and the project was approved by the GEF in March 2005, with implementation beginning at the end of June 2005. The time between design and approval was partially due to extra time required to finalize the project document, involving multiple external consultants, but also due to GEF resource allocation issues related to entry into the EU in 2005 by some countries. The GEF was not able to provide resources to countries like Poland and the Czech Republic once they joined the EU in 2005, so GEF funding in the region as a whole was prioritized for countries joining the initial round of EU accession, while countries like Romania, that would be joining the EU later, received funding for their GEF projects later.

62. In contrast to many GEF projects, however, the delay in approval did not have a significant negative effect on project start-up, and, by chance, may have been beneficial. The project was approved in 2005, at approximately the same time MMNP was fully designated at the national level. This meant when implementation began, the project team could focus on making MMNP operational rather than spending time lobbying to secure the area's protected status. Thus during implementation the project and the protected area were seen as one integrated effort by the project team and by stakeholders.

63. The conditions on the ground changed little despite the long approval time, and few changes to the planned project activities were required during the inception phase. One significant change that was required was the restructuring of the forestry certification activities by the NFA, which became infeasible due to changes in the land restitution laws. This is further discussion in Section IV.B.i below on implementation approach and Section IV.C on adaptive management.

64. One unfortunate aspect of the timing was that the key project champion, Mr. Moisei, the head of the Ecological Society of Maramureş, passed away very shortly after project approval. It was feared that the momentum and progress in Maramureş would come to a halt with the loss of the main project champion, and that the efforts spent to that point would go for naught. Fortunately Mr. Moisei's legacy was such that the pieces were in place for the project to successfully begin implementation at this point, and many of the people involved felt a personal responsibility to ensure that the project was successfully implemented. Many individuals contributed to the development and initiation of the project, but the vision and tenacity of Mr. Moisei was a primary influence in making MMNP a reality.

B. Project Management and Cost-Effectiveness (Efficiency)

65. MMNP project efficiency is rated highly satisfactory. The project was implemented in a highly cost-effective manner, and the project results achieved are commensurate with (or exceed) the level of investment from the GEF and co-financing partners. Financial management and reporting were carried out with a high degree of professionalism and responsibility. Procurement was conducted without problem. The project succeeded in leveraging additional funds following project approval, and the park administration team has developed the capacity to apply for and access new financing sources available from the EU.

i. MMNP Project Implementation Approach

66. The project was implemented under National Execution arrangements, with the NFA as the national agency responsible for execution. Within the NFA, there is a small division for nature protection (based in Bucharest) that supports the NFA's obligations to the MoE to manage the majority of Romania's protected areas.

67. The "project team" was made up by the management staff of MMNP, the headquarters of which is in the town of Vişeu de Sus, within the park boundaries. For a majority of the project, the project team consisted of the park manager and the chief accountant, with park rangers and additional staff hired in the later stages of the project. The park manager noted that when hiring the initial staff members it was very difficult to explain to them their role and what they were going to do, since there was no well-known example in the region of how protected area management is supposed to function.

68. A critical aspect of the implementation approach that will contribute significantly to the sustainability of the project was the agreement with the NFA prior to implementation that the NFA would take responsibility for the MMNP protected area from the beginning, under its contract with the MoE for protected area management. The project implementation team was employed by the NFA from the beginning of the project, and was considered in effect the staff for the protected area, not for the project. Because the NFA took on financial responsibility of MMNP at the beginning of the project and now includes this support in its annual budget planning, this support is expected to continue now that the project is complete. The annual budget for MMNP operations from the NFA was approximately \$80,000 in 2008, and \$145,000 in 2009, reflecting the NFA's commitment to increase support for activities once GEF funding has finished (though the management team expects to actually receive only \$100,000). One of the project indicator targets was securing an annual operating budget of at least \$70,000.

69. The financial arrangement with the NFA was based on a similar model used for the World Bank – GEF project in Romania "Biodiversity Conservation Management Project" which focused on three protected areas, and was implemented from 1999 – 2006. For the World Bank project the involved parties negotiated that the NFA would pay for seven protected area management staff members at each of the three protected areas involved. It was planned that this model would then be replicated with other projects such as the Maramureş project (as well as the Macin Mountains MSP). The specific motivation for the NFA accepting this additional financial responsibility can only be theorized, but presumably it provided the NFA with a more substantial leverage point vis-à-vis other government bodies such as the MoE.

70. Some stakeholders have questioned this arrangement where an agency whose primary mission is resource exploitation is also responsible for managing protected areas. While this skepticism is understandable in theory, in practice the NFA has lived up to its financial and environmental responsibilities for at least MMNP, and the relevant stakeholders are satisfied with this arrangement. This institutional arrangement has proven effective and should be maintained at least until other relevant government institutions have the financial and technical capacity to effectively manage the full national protected area system. It may be said that the current arrangement is an effective way of mainstreaming biodiversity considerations in the forestry sector in Romania.

71. The NFA covered MMNP project staff salaries, rather than the project team being paid by the project budget, or in addition to the project budget. Although positive for the project's sustainability, this presented a challenge for the project staff members, who took on a significant additional workload to carry out the project activities, in comparison to the staff of an average protected area in Romania. For example, during the project implementation period the project manager forsook personal leave time to ensure the project was implemented to the fullest successful degree possible. The original project budget provided for project staff salaries, but based on the agreement with the NFA this money was reprogrammed for additional project activities. This was also in-line with the GEF's policy of not paying for or topping up government staff salaries for individuals involved in project implementation.

72. A Project Oversight Committee (POC), made up of the Maramureş biodiversity consortium stakeholders (see Figure 4), supervised project implementation. The POC met biannually, as planned. Individuals attending the POC meetings were often representatives of the directors of the respective organizations rather than the directors themselves, though the highest level stakeholders, such as the President of the Maramureş County Council, did attend the meetings on occasion. At the half-day POC meetings the project manager and chief accountant would present on the project progress to date, the proposed six-month workplans, and any specific issues facing the project. Attending representatives would then report back to their respective institutions.

73. The POC mechanism was one of the keys to successful project implementation - not because the project team needed POC supervision, but because this mechanism enabled regular communication between the project team and key regional / county-level stakeholders. While the MMNP headquarters were in Vişeu de Sus more than two hours away from the county government seat of Baia Mare, the project maintained a small office in Baia Mare, and the POC meetings were typically held in Baia Mare. This regular communication allowed the project manager to build support for protected area management objectives, and raise awareness on key issues facing the park so other agencies and organizations could also support the project implementation in their own work. It is likely that the POC functioned well because of the long-standing stakeholder participation and support that had been developed long before the project began.

74. Experience in other GEF-supported projects has shown that to successfully implement integrated ecosystem management principles and mainstream biodiversity in development, there must be a central mechanism for communication and coordination between key stakeholders. The project manager has indicated a strong commitment to continuing this mechanism following the end of the project, as it is considered key to the ongoing successful management of the protected area, and requires relatively little time and money (one half-day, sack lunches).

Figure 4 Maramureş Biodiversity Consortium / Project Oversight Committee

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

75. It was originally envisioned that a tri-partite review committee - consisting of an NFA representative, a UNDP representative, and the project manager - would meet regularly to review project progress. This review meeting would also provide input to the annual PIR monitoring process. During project implementation the level of communication between the project manager and the NFA and UNDP was sufficiently frequent through informal regular contact that a formal meeting structure was not required, and the tripartite review mechanism was not implemented. The project mid-term evaluation recommended that the formal tri-partite review mechanism be revived on a monthly or semi-monthly basis to allow the NFA and UNDP to regularly monitor the project's progress. At the time of the terminal evaluation it appeared that progress monitoring was sufficiently handled through consistent informal communication. The project team also submitted quarterly progress reports to UNDP.

76. The park management has two additional oversight bodies, a consultative council, and a scientific council. The membership for both councils is proposed by the MMNP administration to the Ministry of Education and Sustainable Development (MESD), which confirms nominations through a Ministry Order. The nomination for the scientific council is first sent to Romanian Academy (Commission for Monuments of Nature) before being sent to the MESD. The scientific council consists of 13 academic specialists from the universities in Baia Mare and Cluj, and is chaired by the representative from the Ecological Society of Maramureş. The scientific council reviews all proposed actions or decisions that have environmental impact

implications, and in particular, it contributes to environmental impact assessments conducted for actions within the park. The consultative council is a larger group of 54 members, representing the full range of stakeholders in the park. The consultative council was critical for the participatory process of developing the management plan.

ii. Financial Management, Reporting Disbursement and Procurement

77. The MMNP project was highly efficient and cost-effective, with accurate and timely financial reports delivered to UNDP. The project conformed to UNDP financial accounting standards and practices, including conforming to the ATLAS financial management system, and budget lines in UN format by activity. As documented by the mid-term evaluation, “The project financial cycle starts with the approval of annual work plans, then a request of the first annual installment of about 50% of the work plan budget and finally the replenishment is done on an ad-hoc basis of an accepted financial report justifying expenditures paid with cash from the previous installment(s). The exchange rate management is done by UNDP-CO.” Although there was a general depreciation of the dollar relative to European currencies during the period of project implementation, the project team did not identify exchange rate issues as having presented a significant problem for budgeting (in contrast to many GEF projects during the past seven years of dollar depreciation).

78. The project benefited from excellent financial management of project resources at the project level by the project’s chief accountant, as cited by both the UNDP country office and UNDP regional office in Bratislava, and as demonstrated by the project’s financial performance and clear records. When compared to other similar projects in the region, project budgeting and expenditures were well in-line with international and national norms and standards. In relation to the scale and quality of results produced, the project was implemented in a highly efficient manner. This was due, in significant part, to a large amount of (undocumented) personal in-kind co-financing by the project team, contributed by regularly working far in excess of a standard work-week during the four-year implementation period.

79. The project used NFA procurement procedures, which are considered to be more rigorous than UNDP procurement procedures. External auditors conducted annual audits and noted no significant financial issues. As stated by the audit report for 2008, “We noted no matters involving the internal control structure and operations that we consider to be material weaknesses.” The few issues and corrections in financial statements identified through audit procedures were appropriately handled and satisfactorily resolved. For example, the UNDP Romania country office worked with UNDP headquarters to address accounting limitations related to the ATLAS system that affected project financial procedures.

iii. Co-financing and Leveraged Resources

80. Table 4 below shows MMNP project expected and actual co-financing by source and type. The level of co-financing received was 13% greater than anticipated at CEO endorsement, with total actual co-financing of \$1.54 million. The reported in-kind co-financing does not include personal co-financing by the project team, which was likely significant, as mentioned above. More than two-thirds of the reported co-financing was in-kind. As is common among

GEF projects, in-kind co-financing was estimated rather than documented through a structured recording system. This evaluation recommends that UNDP institute a system for documenting in-kind co-financing in GEF projects in a consistent and transparent manner.

81. A portion of the co-financing originally expected from the NFA linked to expenditures anticipated in support of forest certification was not received for practical reasons. Following legislative changes related to land restitution (as discussed in Section V.A, below), the NFA decided to postpone certification until restitution issues had been resolved. As described in the 2006 PIR, “The in-kind figure from NFA is subject to change, however. The difference (\$55k) comes from the forest certification, where the NFA approximated the cost of certifying Maramureş forest. The figure was calculated based on the average 0.7 \$/hectares [multiplied by the number] of state owned hectares. However, now much of that land is being returned to private individuals, so this figure is uncertain and remains to be determined.” Ultimately the NFA has not been able to pursue significant additional certification during the project.

82. Following project approval, an additional \$100,000 in co-financing was leveraged from UNDP’s trust fund, and supported the use of wood waste to heat schools located in MMNP. The project worked with four schools in the poorest areas of the park (Poienile de sub Munte, Repedea, Cravna Vişeuului, and Valea Vişeuului) to improve heating infrastructure, reducing school utility bills by 40% and improving attendance by school children during the winter. A few thousand dollars of additional funds were also leveraged from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - Germany in September-October 2007 to support awareness materials, including a documentary about the importance of river ecosystems, “Water’s Life.”

83. In addition to the reported co-financing, there has been significant additional financing leveraged in support of project objectives. For example, following the sawdust briquette pilot activity supported by the project, Italian investors built a 3 million euro sawdust briquette processing plant in Maramureş (unfortunately the plant burned in the summer of 2009, and it remains to be seen whether new investment will be forthcoming). An additional \$450,000 was received from the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument to support the development of the transboundary biosphere reserve between Ukraine and Romania.

84. The project also successfully partnered with WWF - Romania on multiple fronts, but particularly with regard to increasing awareness of the potential benefits of forest certification. As stated in the project mid-term adaptive management report, “This interaction has led to the MMNP and WWF agreeing to collaborate on the MMNP’s management plan, to sharing data, staff time and expertise.” On ecotourism, the project successfully partnered with a local tourism business drawing attention to the narrow-gauge railway of the Vaser Valley, which is still in industrial use for timber harvesting, one of the last such trains still operating in Europe. Other project partners included the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism (INTBAU).

Table 4 MMNP Project Expected and Actual Co-financing, as of June 30, 2009 (Source: 2009 PIR)

| Co-financing (Type / Source) | IA own Financing (mill US\$) | | Multi-lateral Agencies (Non- GEF) (mill US\$) | | Bi-laterals Donors (mill US\$) | | Central Government (mill US\$) | | Local Government (mill US\$) | | Private Sector (mill US\$) | | NGOs (mill US\$) | | Other Sources (mill US\$) | | Total Financing (mill US\$) | | Percent of Expected Co- financing |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------|---|--------|--------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|--------|---------------------|--------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|--------|---|
| | Propo sed | Actual | Propo sed | Actual | Propo sed | Actual | Propo sed | Actual | Propo sed | Actual | Propo sed | Actual | Propo sed | Actual | Propo sed | Actual | Propo sed | Actual | Actual share of proposed |
| Grant | \$0.05 | \$0.03 | | | | | \$0.26 | \$0.35 | | | | | | | | | \$0.31 | \$0.38 | 123% |
| Credits | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Loans | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Equity | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| In-kind | | | | | | | \$0.75 | \$0.78 | \$0.17* | \$0.15 | | | \$0.10* | \$0.10 | \$0.03 | \$0.02 | \$1.05 | \$1.05 | 100% |
| Non-grant Instruments | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other Types (UNDP Trust Fund) | \$0.00 | \$0.11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | \$0.0 | \$0.11 | |
| TOTAL | \$0.05 | \$0.14 | | | | | \$1.01 | \$1.13 | \$0.17 | \$0.15 | | | \$0.10 | \$0.10 | \$0.03 | \$0.02 | \$1.36 | \$1.54 | 113% |

*Referred to in project document as combined cash and in-kind amount; referred to in PIRs as in-kind amount.

Note: "Proposed" co-financing refers to co-financing proposed at CEO endorsement.

C. Flexibility and Adaptive Management

85. The project logframe, along with other monitoring tools, were used to ensure the project stayed focused on the desired results. The project was implemented in a flexible manner, while ensuring the desired results were achieved. Project progress implementation progress and progress toward outcomes was monitored annually in the PIRs, as further discussed in Section VI.C on monitoring and evaluation. Adaptive management was effectively applied to the logframe to set realistic and achievable targets, based on the on-the-ground reality. The logframe from the project document was revised in the inception report, and again in the adaptive management report following the mid-term evaluation. Annex 9 highlights modifications to the original project logframe, in addition to documenting the level of achievement for each indicator. The project's post-mid-term evaluation adaptive management report is an excellent innovation, which could be replicated in other GEF projects. Such stock-taking should be done by all projects in conjunction with the mid-term evaluation.

86. In one specific example of adaptive management, the inception report noted that Activity 3.1.3 in the project brief, relating to strengthening capacity of financial institutions to support natural capital entrepreneurs, was re-oriented to focus on organizing workshops on potential alternative livelihoods and NTFPs to support natural capital entrepreneurs. The inception report also includes a revised logframe, though there are few significant changes compared to the original logframe.

87. A second specific example was the mid-term adaptive management report's further revision of the project logframe. The indicator on forest certification was deleted, and the project formally changed its approach to its work on certification, as recommended by the mid-term evaluation. Instead of focusing on the NFA certifying forest within the park, the project moved toward introducing the potential benefits of certified forests to owners of newly restituted private forestlands within MMNP, and sought to identify potential buyers of certified forest products. Another change made in the adaptive management report was to revise the target for the METT score to 68, since the project had exceeded the original target of 28. The project indicators and logframe are discussed further in Section VI.C on monitoring and evaluation.

88. Regarding the use of information technologies, the MMNP project established a website, <http://www.muntiimaramuresului.ro>, which is used as a tool for outreach and awareness-building. The website includes information about the park, park administration, and provides some information to support tourism. The website is produced in both Romanian and English, which greatly enhances its utility for supporting international tourism. However, the website has greater potential utility than is currently leveraged. Additional value could be derived by providing additional tourism information for the region, and by functioning as a knowledge portal on MMNP good practices and lessons. The website is also irregularly updated – at the time of the terminal evaluation in July 2009, the leading page on the website documented the flood in the Vaser Valley in July 2008, and included on the staff list as a outreach officer an individual who had left the park administration in June 2008. In the modern information age a website highlighting information over one year old gives the impression of being stagnant, which reduces its value to the casual user.

89. The website could be leveraged to much greater extent in support of tourism – the internet is one of the main resources for information on tourism and foreign travel, and the park administration is well-positioned to provide information relevant to tourists. For a region such as Maramureş, which is not widely known outside Romania, having a strong and useful internet presence would be highly valuable. Currently the park website lists only two potential accommodations in the region. Translating key sections of the website into German should also be a priority. There are other internet resources for tourism in Romania, but these also currently do not draw attention to MMNP. For example, the national Romania tourism website, <http://www.romaniatourism.com>, includes good information on tourism in Maramureş, but completely fails to mention MMNP, while highlighting Rodnei Mountains National Park and even mentioning the narrow gauge railroad in Vişeu de Sus.

90. Instead of taking on the large burden of developing a full-service tourism website, the park could consider supporting and leveraging partnerships with relevant local and regional organizations to develop an internet presence that would draw attention and visitors to the park. Key potential partners would be the Maramureş County tourism board, the Romanian national tourism agency, local tourism entrepreneurs, and the regional chamber of commerce.

D. UNDP Project Oversight and Comparative Advantage

91. UNDP was the GEF Implementing Agency for the MMNP project, and was therefore responsible for providing oversight and back-up, and working with the project on implementation and financial reporting. Both UNDP and the project team reported a very positive working relationship, which is also evident from the project documentation and results achieved. The project team was in regular (usually weekly) contact with the responsible UNDP country officer throughout the implementation period, and the UNDP country officer and the regional technical advisor carried out multiple project visits per year – four in the 2006 PIR period, four in the 2007 PIR period, three in the 2008 PIR period, and at least two in the 2009 period. UNDP staff at the regional level also remarked on the close cooperation and communication between the UNDP country office and the project team. The NFA reported very positive and transparent cooperation with UNDP. A member of the Maramureş County Council noted that their interaction with UNDP had been excellent and they had learned a lot by working with UNDP.

“For instance, [the UNDP Resident Representative] coming here and cutting the ribbon for the cabin, it was huge for the local community. Local mayors [hadn’t been to the cabin before and haven’t been since], but they figured out, oh my God, something is really happening here, someone is really interested in nature conservation in this area, this guy came here to cut the ribbon of this cabin, this is something.”

- MMNP Park Manager

92. Not only did the project team have strong support from the respective country officer, support was also received from UNDP’s Resident Representative in Romania. The project manager found this level of support to be extremely valuable when dealing with regional and local political and economic pressures. The project manager stated that, when necessary, he felt comfortable asking for a letter of support from the Resident Representative. Support from the Resident Representative was also signified by attendance at multiple project public events,

such as the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the ranger cabin built by the project (keeping in mind that the cabin is at the top of a mountain pass requiring a hike into the park).

93. UNDP's Energy and Environment country officer position had high turnover during the project implementation period, with three different individuals filling the position during the project's four-year implementation period. The project handovers throughout these transitions presented no significant problems for supporting and overseeing project implementation.

94. For the MMNP project UNDP had a comparative advantage in supporting the project to develop the on-the-ground capacity necessary to manage and implement a complex integrated ecosystem management / biodiversity mainstreaming initiative. With UNDP's collaboration and support, MMNP went from having no management staff or management capacity to having a fully functioning effective management regime.

V. Project Performance and Results

A. Key Factors Affecting Project Implementation

95. The strong stakeholder participation has been highlighted throughout this evaluation report as one of the aspects of the MMNP project most significantly responsible for the high level of success achieved. Participation and support from the mayors of the communes in MMNP, and from the regional institutions represented in the Maramureş biodiversity consortium is a legacy of the project development process. Throughout development and implementation the project has been characterized by transparency, cooperation, excellent communication and dedication to the vision of sustainable development in MMNP. By respecting and understanding the needs of communities in MMNP, the project team has been able to develop buy-in and understanding of biodiversity conservation needs in the region.

"We succeeded to develop a partnership; this is the only way we can function, because you simply cannot do something on your own anymore, this is the world we are living in."

- Mayor, Bistra Commune

96. Over the last 20 years as Romania has transitioned to a market economy, one of the key issues facing the government has been restituting land rights and ownership to private individuals and organizations. This difficult process has gone through three stages. In 1991, with Law number 18, the government agreed to return to citizens up to 1 ha of their property. Law 1/2000 provided for restitution of up to 10 ha of land, and Law 274/2005 allowed restitution of all previously privately owned lands.

97. The land restitution process had a significant impact on the project outcomes as originally envisioned. It was anticipated that the NFA would achieve Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for the national forest lands in MMNP. However, between project development and the start of implementation the land restitution process in Romania changed following the passage of Law 274/2005. Because the NFA did not know which land it would ultimately retain, it was not worthwhile to make the investment in certification. The land restitution process in Romania is ongoing; although the term for claims has passed, appeals for claims can be submitted indefinitely. But it is anticipated that the NFA will retain ownership of approximately 30% of the MMNP area.

98. Once the challenges of restitution became apparent, the project team formally shifted its approach to raising awareness among local landowners of the benefits of certification. However, it is not efficient for most individual landowners to pursue certification on their own – to be cost effective, a parcel of at least 100 hectares or so is required. The FSC process can also be onerous for an individual land owner in terms of the management practices required; according to the NFA, in all of Romania there is currently only one privately owned FSC certified forest, and the land owner had a lot of problems achieving certification. The NFA currently has a multi-site certification license from the FSC, but this license expires in 2010, and the NFA may not bother renewing the license because, in the NFA's view, the FSC's certification standards change constantly and are becoming increasingly burdensome, to the extent that some certification requirements are in conflict with Romanian national law.

99. There are two forms of forest ownership in Romania – ownership by an individual, and ownership by a group, called the “associative form” of ownership. Individual landowners can join an ownership association, whereby they no longer control their individual piece of property, but have a “share” in of all the forestland owned by the association. This associative form of ownership provides some opportunity for promoting certification in the long-run, as associations typically own more than the minimum amount of land to make certification cost-effective. Some landowners have expressed their interest in certifying their land, but for certification to move ahead at a significant scale in Maramureş, there needs to be a lumber buyer willing to pay the certification premium. According to NFA sources, the market for certified timber in Romania is nascent but may expand with further economic integration with the EU, as the EU is a primary market for certified timber.

100. Related to the land restitution issues is the issue of government compensation for land on which use rights are restricted by the government. The land restitution and compensation issues must be seen in the context of the history of private property in Romania over the last half-century. Under communism individual property rights were eliminated, which has had three important impacts on Romanians' psychological approach to private property rights following restitution, which affects people's relationship with MMNP.

101. First, people feel that they have lost out on drawing benefits from their land over the past 50 years, and so once ownership has been restored, they scramble to extract value from the land to improve their welfare. For forestland, this typically means harvesting timber, although NTFPs also represent an important source of income in MMNP. Throughout Romania when people received land following restitution there was an initial wave of uncontrolled timber harvesting; for the most part this period has passed.

102. Second, people feel that private property rights are tenuous – their land was taken away once, who's to say it couldn't happen again. There is an inherent mistrust of government land management, and resistance to government restriction on private land-use. The third factor, linked to the first and the second, is that individual landowners have lost the sense of long-term land stewardship. People are interested in short-term gains because they have no sense of what it is like to own property and draw value from it in a long-term sustainable manner.

103. Thus there is understandable resistance to land-use restrictions on newly restituted lands within MMNP, particularly in the core areas where no timber harvesting, or other economic development activities, are allowed. On top of not being able to gain economic

benefits from newly restituted lands, landowners are required to have a contract with the regional forestry directorate for forest management administration of forestlands, for which landowners must pay an annual fee of 15 euros per hectare. The fee can be offset by timber revenue in areas where landowners are allowed to cut the trees deemed harvestable by the NFA, but landowners whose land was zoned as a core area are financially penalized for having received restituted land, with no option for economic gain from the land (they are however exempt from property tax on such land).

104. On the other hand, there are government policies in place to compensate landowners whose economic use rights are restricted, by for example, protected areas. The economic value of a particular piece of land is estimated depending on the forest structure, and the Ministry of Agriculture is supposed to compensate landowners up to 200 euros per hectare per year. The process for requesting compensation is highly bureaucratic, which provides an initial level of discouragement for landowners seeking compensation. Furthermore, according to the NFA, out of approximately 100,000 hectares of land for which compensation was requested nationally in 2008, the government approved payment for just 2,800 hectares. There is general consensus that the government does not have the resources to pay the required compensation. The current compensation program is set to expire in 2010. Although the park administration is not the government body responsible for compensation (the Ministry of Agriculture is), they are the local face of government restrictions on land use in Maramureş. Forest harvesting on private lands and government compensation issues is one of the main issues the park management deals with on a regular basis.

105. It will be important for the park administration to continue working constructively with private landowners to avoid build-up of significant negative feedback towards MMNP. There are numerous options for positive resolution that could be explored in the future. For example, the World Bank – GEF project “Private Land Mechanisms for Biodiversity Conservation in Mexico” was highly successful in developing a toolkit to assist private landowners in gaining economic benefits from private lands managed for biodiversity conservation. Whether such a toolkit could be replicated in the Romanian context would require significant study and legal analysis, but the success in the Mexican context provides a positive example. In other regions, mechanisms such as conservation easements have provided opportunities for private landowners to benefit from maintaining the conservation value of their land.

106. As discussed elsewhere in this report, the reality of EU accession presented multiple opportunities and constraints for biodiversity conservation in Romania in general, and the MMNP project in particular. By being designated as part of Romania’s Natura 2000 network, MMNP is likely to have additional opportunities for financial support through EU compensation payments. At the same time, Romania’s failure to meet its EU environmental conservation obligations in a timely manner means such support may be restricted in the short-term.

B. Achievement of Anticipated Outcomes (Effectiveness)

107. Overall, project effectiveness is considered to be highly satisfactory, as described below for each project outcome.

i. Outcome 1: MMNP Becomes Fully Operational

108. Achievement of Outcome 1 is rated highly satisfactory. In the period of four years the protected area has gone from being newly gazetted and existing only on paper, to having a fully functioning administrative unit, a comprehensive management plan agreed with all stakeholders, and working partnerships with regional and local government institutions in implementing and enforcing the park management plan. The number of hectares under strict conservation management is 18,769 compared to an initial target of 7,800. Looking at the METT indicator, the park went from a baseline score of 19 in 2005, to a score of 70 in 2009. MMNP is considered by the NFA to be one of Romania's leading protected areas in terms of the level and quality of management.

109. As further outlined under Outcome 2 below, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the MMNP project is the degree to which the protected area management and regulations have been mainstreamed into county and municipal development procedures, which is a key part of making MMNP operational. The institutional partnerships and mechanisms in place give the MMNP management staff the opportunity to provide input on and review investment and development activities in the region to ensure park regulations are respected and incorporated. As described by various stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation field visit, the protected area management team is now seen as a respected and valuable partner in the ongoing regional development process. The level of trust and confidence the park management receives from all stakeholders is a product of transparency, public outreach, and excellent communication – the hallmarks of the Maramureş project.

110. Multiple factors have contributed to the project's success in developing a management model highly integrated with local and regional development. As previously mentioned, through the project's life, there has been strong stakeholder participation and support for the overall vision of MMNP. Another important factor is that MMNP covers such a large percentage (22%) of the area of Maramureş County. Because of the geographic scale, and even more importantly the human population within the protected area boundaries, relevant government agencies are in some sense compelled by Romanian law to work with the park management. With such a large jurisdiction in the county, the MMNP administration clearly has a role to play in regional development processes. The park management worked directly with regional and local institutions to increase awareness and understanding of the relevant national and regional legislation and policies that justify the park's existence and operations.

111. The main achievement in operationalizing the park has been the development, and approval at the local level, of a comprehensive and technically sound management plan for MMNP. The management plan is the primary tool for operationalizing all facets of the park management regime. The management plan includes the park zoning of core areas and sustainable use areas, which is considered by relevant authorities to accurately reflect the environmental priorities and realities on the ground. The management plan was developed through a participatory process with all relevant stakeholders by leveraging the park's consultative council.

112. The park administration is currently managing the park in line with the management plan, although the plan is awaiting official approval at the national level, as are all protected area management plans in Romania. Romania was compelled during the EU accession process

to create, under the MoE, a national protected areas agency to be responsible for oversight of all protected areas. Legislation requires this national agency to approve all protected area management plans. In fact, this new national protected areas agency is not presently operational. The agency was operational for the first three months of 2009, with a staff of three persons. After the first three months the Romanian government eliminated funding for the agency, citing insufficient government budgets related to the global economic crisis. Thus, MMNP, and all other protected areas in Romania, remain in limbo: they are required by law to have their management plans approved by the national protected areas agency, which does not exist. Institutional issues are discussed further in Section VI.A.iii on institutional risks to sustainability.

113. However, during the three months that the protected areas agency did exist, many protected areas submitted their management plans for approval. According to one of the former staff members of the national protected areas agency, the Maramureş management plan was very technically sound and among the best prepared. Further, each protected area was required to demonstrate local stakeholder approval for the management plan, and Maramureş was the only protected area to show full stakeholder support quickly and easily.

114. As discussed in Section VI.A.ii, finding and hiring quality staff remains one of the greatest challenges for MMNP, due to the low level of the government salaries and the remote location of the protected area. The average park ranger annual salary is approximately one tenth of Romania's per capita GDP. The management plan organizational chart for MMNP has 15 staff – four office staff and 11 park rangers. In 2008 the number of staff members peaked at 11, however at present there are only eight staff members – three office staff and five park rangers. It is anticipated that staffing will remain one of the main long-standing challenges for park management, particularly as economic opportunities in Romania continue to expand following EU accession.

115. Although its human resources are limited, the staff has a high level of technical qualifications and capacity. The park manager continues to seek out quality individuals to bring onto the staff; some of the current staff were hired away from other regional institutions represented on the POC. To support capacity building of the park staff multiple training activities were undertaken, including training for the park manager through a globally recognized protected area training course in Montana, USA; training in Global Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) for park rangers; and finance training for the chief accountant through the Romanian Association of Accounting Experts.

116. Another aspect of operationalizing the park management was infrastructure improvement. Primarily this entailed the renovation of the park headquarters building in Vişeu de Sus. The building now provides the requisite office space for the park staff, and serves as a meeting space for stakeholder activities. The upstairs of the building is currently being renovated to serve as the Natural Capital Center, another of the planned outputs under Outcome 3. The project also supported updated park mapping, and outputs such as tourist maps for Repedeş and Vaser Valleys.

117. On the ground enforcement of protected area regulations is carried out in partnership with local enforcement authorities, primarily the Forest Inspectorate (the enforcement division of the Forestry Directorate), and the Environmental Inspectorate (the enforcement division of

the EPA). The park rangers are assigned one area of the park to patrol, and patrols are carried out multiple times per week. When park rangers notice activities out of line with park regulations, such as timber being harvested in a core area, the infraction is reported to the Forest or Environmental inspectorate, which issues citations, fines, or more significant penalties depending on the type of infraction. In instances of criminal behavior, the park management works with local police and other law enforcement authorities. In hindsight, the park manager indicated that one thing he would have liked to have done differently early in project implementation was to be more rigorous in scouting for violations and undertaking enforcement activities, since this is the way to increase understanding and awareness of protected area objectives, and to develop respect from the local people, as long as regulations are applied in an even manner in all cases.

***“You know, the park manager
doesn’t have to be elected.”
- MMNP Park Manager***

118. Further in support of this outcome the park administration carried out a number of education and awareness building activities. The local teachers association adopted an environmental curriculum developed by the project. The park staff conducted a “summer school” for 100 local children with a visit into the natural areas of the park, which highlighted and emphasized the importance of ecosystem services and the role of conservation.

119. A limited number of original logframe targets were not completely met during the life of the project, such as the park administration supporting the cost of a monitoring program. The original project logframe with relevant adaptive management measures and actual level of achievement for specific indicator targets is included in Annex 9.

ii. Outcome 2: Environmental Governance Strengthened

120. MMNP project effectiveness for Outcome 2 is considered highly satisfactory. The start of the evaluation field visit to MMNP was punctuated by a phone call to the park manager from the mayor of one of the communes within MMNP. The mayor robustly expressed his dissatisfaction that the park administration had denied the application for a 30 million euro hydropower investment in an area of MMNP not zoned for such types of development. The investment group later contacted the park manager directly to identify opportunities for

***“We are in a way happy that, you know,
that the mayor is screaming at me. That’s
good, because that means we set our
system and it works, and that means we
can stop some investments or some bad
things that can happen in certain places.”
- MMNP Park Manager***

investment in appropriately zoned areas of MMNP. This incident provides an excellent example of the degree to which environmental governance has been strengthened in MMNP. The project, through the park administration, has successfully taken advantage of a number of mechanisms to link environmental considerations in local development procedures.

121. The project has succeeded in mainstreaming park management and biodiversity considerations into local development and economic investment procedures by establishing the park zoning, which is agreed by all stakeholders. The park zoning was established through the participatory management plan development process, based on data collected in the 2007 biodiversity survey which identified priority conservation areas of the park.

122. There are two important mechanisms through which mainstreaming actually occurs: First, through incorporation of park input into the development permitting system, and second, by the inclusion of the park administration on the county technical committee that determines which proposed investments require environmental impact assessments. The agreements between the park management and local government are particularly important because the national protected areas law has recently been amended, with Article 28 of the amendment eliminating the requirement that protected area authorities be consulted before permitting economic development activities within protected area boundaries. This amendment has strong negative implications for Romania's protected area system as a whole, but should have limited effect in MMNP thanks to the arrangements agreed with all stakeholders.

123. Clear and appropriate information flows are a critical part of the effective mainstreaming process. The park management worked closely with local planning authorities to ensure the zoned areas were recognized and understood based on a clear map. With justification in the national and county legislation regarding development in protected areas (e.g. Government Ordinance 57/2007, prior to the amendment of the protected areas legislation), the local development permitting process requires MMNP administration approval for developments in or near the protected area boundaries. The first step for any economic development investment in Romania is for the proposer to obtain a "certificate of urbanization" from the local authorities, which indicates which types of permits are required before the investment can go ahead – i.e. building permits, water permits, etc. As required by national law, this certificate of urbanization in Maramureş includes permitting from the MMNP administration if investments are proposed within MMNP boundaries.

124. The second important mechanism is the formal inclusion of the park administration on the technical committee of the EPA for determining which investments require environmental impact assessments. Although the park administration had been included on an ad-hoc informal basis for some time, in June 2009 the park manager received notice that the county council had approved the park's formal inclusion on the committee. The MMNP scientific council provides the technical input on environmental impact assessments.

125. A third positive outcome with respect to mainstreaming and environmental governance is the work completed on rural architecture, supporting the traditional "wooden civilization." In consultation with local stakeholders the project team identified measures for keeping the traditional regional architecture. As previously mentioned, the project partnered with INTBAU to review the guidelines for traditional architecture. Architectural specialists gathered in Maramureş to analyze the traditional architectural elements, and reviewed the traditional architectural guidelines produced under the project. These guidelines were incorporated in the region's first urban development plan, for the city of Vişeu de Sus and were shared with all municipalities. They have been made mandatory in five of the 10 park communities - Vişeu de Sus, Petrova, Vişeu de Jos, Bistra and Ruscova – and are in the process of being incorporated in the remaining communities development plans. The actual enforcement of the guidelines remains difficult, as those constructing new buildings do not always seek the necessary municipal design approvals. Once the initial stages of structure are in place, it is politically inconvenient for mayors to have a community member's new home torn down.

iii. Outcome 3: Stakeholders Realize Value in Natural Capital

126. Achievement of Outcome 3 for the MMNP project is considered moderately satisfactory. There were multiple significant achievements under this outcome, including excellent progress in reducing the impact of sawdust waste on riparian ecosystems, and the high quality Total Economic Value study supported by the project. At the same time, there remains great potential for further progress in this area. As identified in the TEV study there are multiple as-yet-unexploited possibilities for local communities to reap benefits from the region's natural capital. It must also be noted that due to factors completely outside the control of the project, the originally envisaged progress toward forest certification by NFA was not realized.

127. Among the successful sub-outcomes related to the overall outcome was the demonstration of the sawdust briquette market. The project supported a pilot activity to demonstrate that processing and burning sawdust for energy could be a profit-making enterprise in Maramureş. Following the successful demonstration, foreign investors developed a much larger processing facility (a 3 million euro investment, as mentioned in Section IV.B.iii). This enterprise has since faced additional competition in the market from other foreign producers who pay for the collection of sawdust and transport it abroad for further processing. This initiative, along with the related project management and enforcement activities, has greatly reduced the amount of sawdust and wood waste affecting water quality in the Maramureş. Of the 100 originally identified riparian sawdust dump sites, the 30 large and 40 small dump sites have been eliminated. The 30 small dump sites that remain average 30m² and cannot easily be re-used because the sawdust is old and wet. In addition, the project promoted the use of wood waste in municipal heating boilers, with a revised target of 150 tons/year consumed, which was surpassed, with 160 tons consumed on average each winter. In addition, the local wood processing company that is certifying its chain of custody is using 3000 tons/year. The original project logframe had as a target 5,000 tons of wood waste used in boilers by year 4, but this target became obsolete because the market for wood waste use in particle board expanded, so it was not cost-effective to use wood waste in boilers for heating.

128. Multiple stakeholders and project participants identified the TEV study supported by the project as a seminal achievement in Romania. This study, carried out by an external expert, is very comprehensive and technically sound. The study identified 11 total ecosystem services, of which five were considered Key Ecosystem Services for the region: 1. Sustainable forest management and watershed protection; 2. Recreation and tourism; 3. Biodiversity; 4. Carbon sequestration; 5. Traditional landscapes and cultural heritage. A survey of 131 tourists was completed as part of the TEV, which concluded that the 10,000 annual visitors to the region contribute approximately 5 million RON (\$1.7 million USD) to the local economy. The total direct use of ecosystem services was estimated to be approximately 72 million RON (\$25.0 million USD). Indirect and non-use benefits, not including carbon sequestration, were estimated as approximately 51 million RON (\$17.7 million USD). The carbon sequestration valuation of the area was estimated based on two different methodologies (one more conservative), and provided values of 27 million RON (\$9.4 million USD) or 172 million RON (\$59.8 million USD). Using the conservative estimate for carbon sequestration, the total economic value of the ecosystem services of MMNP is 150 million RON (\$52.1 million USD).

129. The economic valuation results were disseminated among stakeholders within Maramureş and at the national level were shared with 10 other NFA-supported protected areas. The study provided four concrete recommendations for follow-up and further exploitation of ecosystem services. Recognizing that concepts such as ecosystem services take a long time to be fully socialized, and then to be leveraged, on the whole the results of the study have not yet been put into action. There remains significant potential to apply ecosystem service valuation and other concepts highlighted by the study. Being the first study of its kind in Romania, it will take time for the concepts and results to be incorporated in environmental and financial management, not just in Maramureş but other regions in Romania as well. As noted in the 2007 adaptive management report, “The project team needs to now think carefully about how it can help key stakeholders to DO something with the main findings of this report.”

130. There was one concrete example of outcomes from the TEV study. Two municipalities, Bistra and Repedea, succeeded in leveraging the carbon sink potential of their own managed forests in the park (core area and buffer zone), by signing a carbon sequestration contract with a private company that needed emission reduction credits, getting 150/US\$/year/ha, for a total contract value of \$60,000/year. Although the two municipalities did receive the initial quarterly payment of \$15,000, the programs were discontinued due to breach of contract by the initiator of the scheme.

131. One avenue the park administration should explore to further leverage the financial benefits of the region’s natural capital is initiating and supporting the development of a regional trademark for locally made products or approved tourism-related services. Regional branding is a growing tool in new EU countries to support local producers and expand market opportunities through increased awareness of regional identities and products, and can be a highly effective marketing tool. Two examples of regional branding supported by GEF projects that could be reviewed as examples for Maramureş are the Dolni Baryczy brand in Poland’s Barycz Valley (<http://www.barycz.pl>), and regional brands developed in Beskedy and Bílé Karpaty Protected Landscape Areas in eastern Czech Republic (<http://www.tradicebk.cz> and <http://www.domaci-vyroby.cz>).

132. The project document originally indicated that the NFA would move ahead with FSC certification of national forest land in MMNP. However, the restitution Law 274/2005 made this infeasible, as described in Section V.A. This change resulted from the breakdown of an assumption at the time of project development regarding the status of land tenure in MMNP. Although the restitution law change happened shortly after project approval, it likely could have been foreseen, and avoided in project development. The project satisfactorily dealt with this issue through adaptive management, and re-oriented the certification-related activities. When this shift was chosen, the certification target should have been dropped from the PIR/logframe reporting. Due to raised awareness on the benefits of forest certification, carried out in partnership with WWF, a local company that processes 60,000 m³ of wood/year is certifying its chain of custody to increase the value of its products, and has requested the NFA to provide it with certified wood. The protected area management team retains the long-term goal of having NFA certify 30,000 ha in the Vaser Valley.

133. Additional achievements under this outcome included the promotion of the tourism potential of the area through the organization of cultural events promoting local folk songs and

dances, the development of tourism infrastructure, and the preparation of the tourism master plan. The park also partnered with WWF to develop a project proposal under European Neighborhood Policy Instruments to improve the riparian zones of the Tisza River, and address solid waste management. WWF is also carrying forward some of the experiences from the TEV study elsewhere in Romania, and in other Carpathian protected areas in Poland and Slovenia.

VI. Key GEF Performance Parameters

A. Sustainability

134. As an aggregate of the four below components of sustainability, the results of the MMNP project are assessed as likely to be sustained.

i. Financial Risks to Sustainability

135. The financial sustainability of the project results in MMNP is considered highly likely, reflecting low risks in this area. The NFA is under contract through 2014 to support the protected areas under its supervision, thus it is fully expected the NFA will continue providing at least the baseline level of funding required for park staff salaries and maintenance of infrastructure. In the 2008-2009 economic downturn the NFA's revenue and thus budget has declined, and the park administration was requested to make a 20% across-the-board budget cut. Taking the current financial crisis into consideration, it is still expected that the NFA will provide the necessary minimum level of funding. In addition, through the project experience the park staff has developed the capacity to apply for additional funding through EU supported opportunities, and other external programs. Significant new externally supported park initiatives have not yet been developed, but the park administration has developed multiple project proposals for various funding sources, in particular for funding from the environmental Sectoral Operational Programme funding from the EU.

136. The park administration has begun to develop some direct revenue streams, but these remain insignificant for the park's overall budget. The park-produced tourist maps sell for \$5, and the Vaser Valley train tourism operator has agreed to donate 1 euro per tourist to support conservation. In addition the park receives between \$17 and \$85 per each permit issued for development activities within the Park. To take further significant steps toward developing direct revenue the park administration should develop a detailed long-term business plan, drawing on the information and data presented in the TEV study, as well as other relevant sources.

ii. Socio-Economic Risks to Sustainability

137. Based on the assessed socio-economic risks, the sustainability of the MMNP project results is considered likely. There are a multiple potential socio-economic risks, but at this time they are not considered critical. The most important risk is MMNP's situation in relation to compensation payments for private landowners whose land use is restricted by the park management regime. The current compensation system is non-functional, and by default the park administration is held liable by landowners. The situation is exacerbated by Romania's inability to fulfill EU requirements for the Natura 2000 system, and the current economic crisis. Once the Natura 2000 system is functional in Romania, there may be the possibility of EU

financed compensation payments for those landowners with land in a designated Natura 2000 site. However, for example, in the Czech Republic it took four years after EU accession for this system to begin. For Romania this would imply at least another two years of a non-functional compensation system, during which time the park management will have to mollify disenfranchised landowners. Even with the possibility of EU financed payments, multiple issues would have to be ironed out, such as dealing with associative landowners and landowners who may have land in a MMNP core area that is not covered by the Natura 2000 site.

138. A second risk is park administration human resources. The park manager identified the lack of qualified personnel willing/able to work for the salaries offered by the park administration as his top concern. MMNP is in a remote, somewhat undeveloped area with limited economic and educational resources. Thus for someone with good technical skills, working for the park administration is relatively unattractive compared to the economic opportunities available in urban areas.

139. Related to this is the risk that the effective operation of the park administration is highly dependent on the individuals who have been involved throughout the project implementation. Effective park management requires strong trust and communication, and the relationships with regional and local stakeholders built up over time. To highlight this aspect, the park manager recently had to get a new cell phone because the previous one did not hold more than 2,000 telephone numbers. As in any situation, the effectiveness of the park administration is dependent on the individuals involved. Such risks can be mitigated to a small extent by reducing as much as possible the potential for single points of failure in the park operations and administration, for example by having an assistant to the chief accountant who is fully familiar with the financial operations of the park, or by having an assistant park manager who supports the park manager and who can be a secondary link for the necessary stakeholder relationships.

iii. Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability

140. In relation to institutional and governance risks the sustainability of MMNP project results is considered likely. The primary risk in this context is the role and structure of the national protected areas agency, which has been created to fulfill Natura 2000 requirements related to EU accession. As previously described in Section V.B.i, the national protected areas agency was in existence for the first three months of 2009, but currently has no funding and is not operational. The situation remains fluid, but as of August 2009 it is expected that the agency will be a Bucharest-based department of the MoE, despite some internal apprehension about the effectiveness of centrally administering almost 19% of Romania's territory (the amount of area covered by Natura 2000 sites). As already described, this new agency is already creating challenges for protected areas in terms of bureaucracy of getting management plans approved at the national level. The specific institutional risks to MMNP of the new agency are limited, but, combined with the recent weakening amendments to the national protected areas legislation, the institutional framework for protected area management in Romania as a whole remains uncertain.

141. The other main governance risk is the incomplete restitution process. Because there is no deadline for restitution claims, and no limit to appeals, government land tenure in MMNP in

the near future cannot be definitively known. This creates challenges for management planning, and for initiatives such as certification of NFA forests.

142. As previously mentioned, the recent amendment to the national protected area legislation is a negative development for Romania's protected area system as a whole, but should have limited effect in MMNP thanks to the management mechanisms put in place with support of relevant regional government institutions and stakeholders.

iv. Environmental Risks to Sustainability

143. Based on an assessment of potential environmental risks, the sustainability of MMNP project results is considered likely. The main environmental risk is illegal logging, of which there is two forms – small land holders cutting a few trees on their property outside of proper zoning or NFA approval, and larger scale organized illegal logging (highlighted by a front-page article in a regional newspaper published during the evaluation field visit). Neither form of illegal logging is considered a significant threat to the ecological integrity of the park, but the scale of the latter is not fully known. Further, the larger scale illegal logging presents a challenge to the integrity of the park administration, and, if it becomes commonly known within local communities, could contribute to a cascade effect of illegal logging in the park.

144. Though the project has had a positive influence on water quality in the region by reducing sawdust and wood waste dumping in riparian areas, these remain a low level threat. Though it is a managed activity, gravel harvesting from the Vişeu River bed must also be considered an environmental threat, particularly to sensitive species such as the Danube salmon (*Hucho hucho*). The present existence of the Danube salmon in the Vişeu River is only anecdotally known, and the 2007 park biodiversity inventory was unable to find any specimens. Gravel harvesting undoubtedly reduces water quality by increasing turbidity and eliminating riverbed and riparian zone habitats. The economic benefit to the community may warrant the allowance of such an activity, but the environmental effects should be carefully monitored.

145. A final potentially large, but relatively unknown risk is the remaining mining waste from the decommissioned mines. Mining waste presents multiple potential environmental problems – tailing pond dams can break, unleashing massive pollution on aquatic ecosystems. Mining wastes are also capable of polluting ground water supplies to the significant detriment of the human population. This risk should be further investigated, and the park administration should work with the mine decommissioning bodies to ensure that all potential threats are adequately dealt with.

B. Catalytic Role: Replication and Scaling-up

146. The MMNP project has in some sense a built-in replication mechanism thanks to the project's oversight by the NFA, which also oversees the majority of Romania's other protected areas. In this way the positive lessons and examples from the MMNP project can be filtered through NFA to other park administrations. The degree to which this is actually occurring is unknown, but it is likely to be a diffuse long-term process rather than a discrete one. One specific example was the dissemination of the TEV study results to 10 other protected areas.

147. The project has also been catalytic in increasing the capacity of the park administration to seek external funding, i.e. to support the possibility of the transboundary biosphere reserve

with the Ukraine. As another example, the park developed with the County Council a joint project using the European Cross Border Cooperation Programme to support two new information centers in the park. As was also previously mentioned, the project leveraged significant additional financing for related initiatives, such as the external investment to scale up sawdust briquette production.

148. Among the most significant potential catalytic effects is the progress toward the transboundary biosphere reserve with the Ukraine.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

149. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for the MMNP project is considered satisfactory. M&E procedures were clearly outlined in the project document and were adequately budgeted. The logframe was complete, with indicators that mostly met SMART criteria. Reporting was complete and timely.

i. Project Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation

150. The MMNP project document outlines M&E procedures in a specific section with details the required elements of the M&E plan, and the associated roles and responsibilities. The elements of the M&E plan include:

- An inception workshop and report, to refine and further define indicators and targets
- An impact measurement table, to be developed in the inception workshop, based on the logframe
- The project logframe (further discussed below)
- Steering committee meetings, and UNDP field visit missions
- Annual workplans
- Tripartite review meetings
- Annual Project Reviews / PIRs, and a Terminal Report
- Quarterly progress reports submitted by the project manager to UNDP
- Mid-term and terminal evaluations
- Financial audits

151. All elements of the M&E plan were carried out as planned with the exception of the Tripartite review mechanism, as discussed in Section IV.B.i. In addition, the project implemented the excellent innovation of the mid-term adaptive management report, which, based on the findings of the mid-term evaluation, identified changes required in the project's implementation plans. The project budget in the project document includes a line for "Project Management, M&E, and audit" for \$32,000 for the life of the project. It would be preferable to have external evaluation and audit budgeting separate from project management. The total actual evaluation costs for the mid-term and terminal evaluations are not known, but these exercises have been adequately financed.

152. The project's monitoring and reporting was conducted in a timely manner, with quarterly progress reports, financial reports, and PIRs completed on schedule and in a comprehensive manner. The external mid-term evaluation was also extremely comprehensive

and completed on schedule, and served as an important input to this terminal evaluation. The project team developed specific responses to each of the mid-term evaluation recommendations. On the whole each of the recommendations was followed up on and addressed in a satisfactory manner. A complete analysis of project follow-up to the mid-term recommendations can be found in Annex 10.

153. The project logframe went through a number of revisions throughout the life of the project, as necessitated by conditions on the ground. Additional changes could have or should have been formalized however; for example the forest certification target should have been removed from the logframe and annual PIR reporting for the project, even if the certification target remains a long-term goal for the protected area. The logframe in the original project document was adequately designed, with indicators and targets that generally met SMART criteria. The main shortcoming was that a number of the end-of-project targets seem to be arbitrary, in particular the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) target, as discussed below. As a minor example, one target was for the website for the knowledge network to have 100 hits per month from protected area staff in Romania – what kind of achievement 100 hits per month would signify is not clear without some reference point. Furthermore, using standard technology it is not possible to know exactly where website hits are coming from without requiring personal registration by users. The original project logframe and associated adaptive management measures are included as Annex 9 to this report.

154. The project team, as part of the annual PIR, used the protected area METT to gauge improvements toward an effective protected area management regime in MMNP. The METT is one of the key tools used by the GEF to aggregate portfolio level results under the first strategic objective in the biodiversity focal area, “Catalyzing the sustainability of protected area systems.” WWF and the World Bank originally developed the METT to assess progress on improving the management of protected areas. The assessment form is broken down into 30 management issues for which the status is assessed on a four point scale (0, 1, 2, 3). The maximum score achievable is 99, but a final score can also be converted as a percentage of the possible score from questions relevant to a particular protected area.

155. The METT score was one of the key indicators in the project logframe under the first project outcome of MMNP becoming fully operational. The project team found the METT to be somewhat helpful as an objective measuring stick to see where progress had been made and in identifying weak areas. Table 5 below shows the project’s METT score progression over time.

Table 5 MMNP Progress on METT Score 2005 - 2008

| | Baseline | Original Target | 2006 | 2007 | Revised Target | 2008 | 2009 |
|------------|----------|-----------------|------|------|----------------|------|------|
| METT Score | 19 | 28 | 26 | 56 | 66 | 62 | 70 |

156. The original target score was significantly exceeded by 2007, when the park management was truly beginning to take shape. The original target was proposed as 150% of the baseline score - an arbitrary value without clear explanation of what a score of 28 would represent in terms of improved overall effectiveness of management. Thus, when the original target was exceeded, the value was revised in the 2007 adaptive management report to 350% of the baseline value (66) by the end of the project. The value of 350% of the baseline also

appears to be arbitrary, although increasing the METT score from 19 to 70 over the life of the project clearly represents significant progress toward the establishment of an effective management regime for MMNP.

ii. Environmental Monitoring

157. The main body of biological monitoring data collected during the project was through the comprehensive biological survey conducted in 2007. The data collected replaced the original poor quality baseline data, and in a sense became the baseline as it was much more complete. The data collected was used as a foundational input to the development of the park management plan to ensure that decisions such as park zoning would support the ecological objectives. At the same time, as noted by the project manager, the survey could have been conducted in a more consistent manner.

158. The park administration currently has a biologist on staff, but this position was unfilled for the majority of the project implementation period. The present biological monitoring system is on an ad-hoc basis, with park rangers collecting data opportunistically while on patrol. In addition, when opportunities arise the park administration takes advantage of research conducted in the park by third parties (e.g. university researchers). As discussed in Section VI.D below, data on indicator species identified in the project logframe has been collected. One of the indicators in the project impact measurement table was “first draft of future research and monitoring program endorsed – approach to monitoring to be applied, parameters to be monitored, methods, and priority data needs,” which remains a work in progress. Increasing technical capacity for biological monitoring is a goal of the park administration, and should be considered a high priority. Having concrete data on which to base and justify management decisions is of critical importance for effective long-term park management.

159. The project’s adaptive management report recommended carrying out a study tour on participatory monitoring to Latvia, as recommended in the mid-term evaluation. This has not yet been conducted, but participatory monitoring should remain an important option to support environmental monitoring in MMNP, particularly water quality monitoring. Citizen-based water quality monitoring has been leveraged in many countries to increase the amount of environmental monitoring data available in a cost-effective manner. Further, in many cases, such monitoring programs’ primary goal can be community environmental education and awareness. Although such monitoring programs are generally relatively inexpensive, the feasibility in Maramureş would need to be explored further; there are many examples that could be reviewed for insight on the initiation and operation of such programs (highlighted in the corresponding full recommendation at the end of this report).

D. Project Impacts and Global Environmental Benefits

160. For the GEF biodiversity focal area, project impacts are defined as documented changes in environmental status of species, ecosystems or genetic biodiversity resources. By playing an active and effective role in the regulation of development activities and investments in MMNP, the park authority is having and will continue to have positive environmental impacts. In many cases these are difficult to quantify, because they take the form of avoided negative impacts, i.e. development proposals that the park administration has rejected due to non-conformity with MMNP regulations and zoning.

161. The park manager readily lists numerous specific proposals that have been rejected:
- A) A proposal to develop a ski area in mountains zoned as core area;
 - B) A proposal to develop a hydropower installation in an area that was not zoned for such development;
 - C) Proposals to harvest windfall and beetle killed timber in fragile areas.
162. The park also regulates the area in which gravel is extracted from the bed of the Vişeu River – extraction cannot take place below a certain point in the river that has been deemed critical habitat for the Danube salmon.
163. As previously discussed, the biological monitoring system in MMNP remains under development. However, the limited baseline data, combined with data from the 2007 biological inventory and the ongoing opportunistic field monitoring, indicates positive trends for some indicator species in MMNP. Large carnivores are a good indicator for ecosystems as a whole because they are at the top of the food chain and require large areas of quality habitat. Table 6 below provides data on some key species monitored by MMNP. Current data indicates positive trends for the three indicator species listed.

Table 6 Indicator Species Trends in MMNP

| Category | Species | Baseline (2005) | Current Estimate |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Large carnivore | <i>Ursus arctos</i> | 84 individuals | 90 individuals |
| Large carnivore | <i>Canis lupus</i> | 61 individuals | 68 individuals |
| Game bird | <i>Tetrao urogallus</i> | 294 individuals | 316 individuals |

164. Anecdotal monitoring data also indicates positive trends for 13 amphibian species and for river otters (*Lutra lutra*). Stable healthy populations of *Cochlearia borzeana*, a plant species endemic to the Romanian Carpathians, have also been identified. Ecosystems comprised of Mountain pine (*Pinus mugo*) and *Rhododendron myrtifolium* are also of particular concern and are closely monitored. In addition, the monitoring team assessing fish populations on the Bistra river during the initial biodiversity inventory has recently conducted further monitoring, and found seven species of fish compared to three species found in the 2007 inventory.
165. In the project inception report an “Impact Measurement Table” was developed with “key impact indicators.” The majority of indicators listed are not true “impact” indicators as they do not pertain to environmental status, but one of the indicators is the number of kilometers of river cleaned of solid waste, for which the target is 10 km. The project did undertake a solid waste cleanup project in collaboration with schools, and collected multiple truckloads of plastic bottles and other waste. However, the severe flood of July 26, 2008 and other annual periods of high water have replenished the waste distributed along the banks of the Vişeu River throughout its course. An effective solid waste management plan is not yet in place in the communities of MMNP. The copious amounts of plastic and other debris littering the river banks is more of an aesthetic threat than an environmental one, though it may be an indicator of a common practice of discharging waste into the river, including harmful items such as household chemicals, which present more significant environmental threats.

166. Water quality in the Vişeu River is monitored on an annual basis by the Water Management System authority at four different locations along the river. Table 7 presents a summary of water quality data in the Vişeu River for eight parameters, measured from 2005 – 2008. Overall the water quality is considered to be very good. Data shows improving trends for some indicators such as nutrients and metals. For plankton, algae and macrozoobenthos trends are unclear and quality in some areas remains below optimum. The improvement in water quality in the Vişeu River is likely due to the construction of a wastewater treatment plant in Baia Borşa in 2006, which was constructed as part of the government mining closures, and was partially funded by the World Bank. The plant treats mining wastewater; when a plant breakdown occurred in early 2009 the park staff were among the first to report the change in water quality to the EPA.

Table 7 Vişeu River Water Quality Indicators, 2005 - 2008¹³

| Location | Distance to confluence with Tisza River (km) | Year | Indicators | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|------|------------|-------|------------------|---------------------|--------|-----------|----------|--------|---------------|
| | | | Plankton | Algae | Macro-zoobenthos | Physical indicators | Oxygen | Nutrients | Salinity | Metals | Average class |
| Upstream Borşa | 63 | 2005 | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | 2006 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | 2007 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | 2008 | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Between Borşa and Moisei | 59 | 2005 | | | | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| | | 2006 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | 2007 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | 2008 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Moisei | 52 | 2005 | | | | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| | | 2006 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | | 2007 | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | | 2008 | 2 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Bistra | 10 | 2005 | | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | | 2006 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | 2007 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | | 2008 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |

Key: 1 = Very Good 2 = Good 3 = Moderate 4 = Poor 5 = Very Poor

167. In addition to delivering on-the-ground environmental impacts, GEF projects are expected to deliver results at a scale considered to constitute Global Environmental Benefits. For many projects, particularly GEF MSPs, this requires a degree of scaling up or replication of project lessons and results. For the biodiversity focal area the concept of Global Environmental Benefits has not been clearly defined, but is linked to the scale of the impacts delivered. While sustained effective management of the MMNP area alone could be considered of sufficient

¹³ Source: Maramureş Water Management System Authority

scale to constitute a Global Environmental Benefit, there are other potentially larger scale outcomes as well.

168. For MMNP achievement of Global Environmental Benefits is likely to occur in two ways. First, the long-term likelihood of establishing a transboundary protected area with the Karpatsky Biosphere Reserve in Ukraine is very promising. Securing the effective management and long-term sustainable use of a very large area (more than 250,000 ha of the Carpathian ecosystem if also linked to adjacent protected areas in Ukraine and Romania), would ensure the viability of this globally significant ecosystem, and the species it contains. The MMNP park manager, with support from Maramureş County Council, is in advanced discussion and negotiations with his counterpart on the Ukrainian side, though actual fulfillment of this outcome will eventually require national-level approval.

169. A second, perhaps less-likely and longer-term Global Environmental Benefit, would be replicating the mainstreaming of effective protected area management into regional and local development procedures throughout Romania's protected area system, in relevant sites. The MMNP approach may not be applicable in all protected areas depending on the category of each individual protected area, but in protected areas where sustainable local development and protected area management are highly integrated, the MMNP model has great promise.

E. Stakeholder Participation

170. As has been described in Sections IV.A.ii and V.A, stakeholder participation has been one of the most valuable and highly effective aspects of the MMNP project. The project concept derived from on-the-ground regional and local stakeholders, and had a high level of stakeholder ownership. The full range of stakeholders was actively engaged throughout the project, leading to a highly successful project implementation. The project team can be credited with carrying out the project in a transparent and open manner, with excellent communication.

VII. Main Lessons Learned and Recommendations

A. Lessons from Maramureş Mountains Nature Park

171. To effectively mainstream biodiversity concerns at the regional or local level, there needs to be a mechanism by which the primary actor (project manager, park director, etc.) can interact on a regular basis with key stakeholders to develop effective relationships. This mechanism can take various forms – a local sustainable development committee, such as those modeled by the EU's "LEADER" program (e.g. Local Action Group in "LEADER" parlance), or an active project steering committee are examples. The mechanism should be sustainable once a project has finished. By building key relationships with stakeholders through such a mechanism, protagonists can work to incorporate biodiversity concerns into development procedures, from local development approvals to enforcement activities.

172. The two mechanisms discussed in Section V.B.ii on strengthening environmental governance provide excellent concrete examples of practical ways in which biodiversity considerations can be mainstreamed in economic development processes. In the first instance, the park management has worked with local government authorities to implement national policy requiring park approval in the first step of permitting for any infrastructure investment. In the second mechanism, the park administration has been incorporated at the county level

technical commission responsible for determining the necessity for environmental impact assessments for proposed developments.

173. The MMNP scientific council, consisting of highly technically qualified individuals, plays an important role in park administration. Once appointed the council functions independently from the park administration, and provides independent technical oversight and input to key park management processes such as the revision of the management plan, development approvals, and environmental impact assessments. The separation of the scientific council from the park administration facilitates “unbiased” and transparent park management decision-making based on solid technical grounds. At the same time, this structure provides the park administration with an institutional buffer for potential stakeholder backlash to any particular decision.

174. From a project operational and design perspective, having the ongoing input of an external technical expert can be extremely useful to keep project implementation focused on results, clarify original work plans, and support adaptive management. The experience of the MMNP project also demonstrates that capacity development is a long-term iterative process, and time frames related to capacity development goals should be appropriately calculated. Whether at the individual, institutional or systemic levels, capacity development requires a large amount of time; in particular, the time for activities such as changing a piece of legislation or creating a new institution is often underestimated.

175. Finally, the MMNP project shows the potential value of including NGOs or community-based organizations in project design from the beginning. Such organizations often have strong connections within local communities, and can play an important role in activities such as increasing stakeholder participation through awareness raising and information dissemination.

B. Recommendations for Future Actions Supporting Maramureş Mountains Nature Park

176. **Key Recommendation:** The park administration and involved stakeholders should work to reduce the potential for single points of failure in the park management regime. For example, MMNP should hire an assistant park manager or train current staff to support this role in a practical manner. Specific attention should go toward the building of relationships between all park staff and regional and local government officials relevant to successful park management and administration.

177. **Key Recommendation:** MMNP should place a priority on increasing capacity to collect and manage environmental monitoring data, with the ultimate objective of implementing a regular comprehensive and cost-effective monitoring system. Relatively current, quality data is critical for effective management in the long-term. The well-qualified staff currently in place to manage such a program should be further supported in this role. Examples of cost-effective community-based monitoring techniques include examples such as community-based water quality monitoring, and an annual or bi-annual community bird species counting event.

178. **Key Recommendation:** With the goal of supporting a cost-effective environmental monitoring system, MMNP should explore the feasibility and utility of community-based water-monitoring programs (e.g. waterkeeper programs, adopt-a-stream, etc.). Such programs also help increase community awareness and can be integrated with environmental education

programs. This would also support a watershed management approach to environmental conservation, as was recommended in the project inception report and mid-term adaptive management report. Information on community-based water-monitoring programs can be found at:

- a. <http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/volunteer/>
- b. <http://www.inletkeeper.org/CEMP/overview.htm>
- c. <http://www.georgiaadoptastream.org/home.html>

179. **Key Recommendation:** Throughout the new EU member countries, regional branding has begun to show potential value, as has been demonstrated in western European countries. With the goal of creating incentives for nature protection and realizing value in natural capital, MMNP should explore the possibility of partnering with local producer groups and tourism organizations to develop a regional trademark or ecolabel for Maramureş. This could be done for both products and tourism services. Relevant examples include the regional brand developed for Poland's Barycz Valley protected landscape (<http://barycz.pl/main/>) and the regional brands in the Czech Republic's Carpathian protected landscapes of Beskedy and Bílé Karpaty (<http://www.tradicebk.cz> and <http://www.domaci-vyrobky.cz>).

180. **Recommendation:** MMNP should prioritize investing human resources to develop the park's business plan to contribute to long-term financial sustainability and management activities enhanced beyond baseline levels supported by NFA operational budgets.

181. **Recommendation:** To support economic development through the sustainable use of MMNP resources, MMNP and the NFA should explore specific targeted EU programs such as the LEADER+ program and opportunities for landowner compensation payments related to Natura 2000.

182. **Recommendation:** MMNP and NFA should explore the potential application of private land mechanisms for biodiversity conservation, such as conservation easements.

183. **Recommendation:** MMNP should proactively share experiences with other protected areas in Romania's network, particularly on stakeholder participation and institutional mechanisms for mainstreaming biodiversity concerns in economic development.

184. **Recommendation:** UNDP should implement an agency wide-system for tracking in-kind co-financing in GEF projects in a systematic and well-documented manner. There are examples where this has been done in other GEF projects (see, for example, UNEP's South China Sea regional international waters project completed in 2008). Instituting an in-kind co-financing tracking system would bring accountability and transparency to the in-kind co-financing figures currently reported for GEF projects. It would also likely demonstrate that much greater in-kind co-financing is committed in GEF projects than credit is currently given for.

C. Project Ratings

| Project Component or Objective | Rating | Summary |
|---|--------|--|
| Project Formulation | | |
| Relevance | S | The project was relevant to Romania's environmental and development objectives, the objectives of the CBD, and the GEF biodiversity focal area. |
| Conceptualization/design | S | The project was very well designed – leveraging the NFA as the oversight agency responsible for a majority of Romania's protected areas created built in sustainability and replication mechanisms. The project's overall approach and implementation plan was appropriate. The primary shortcoming was that the project was overambitious, particularly in being designed for a three-year implementation period. |
| Stakeholder participation | HS | The project development process was fully stakeholder initiated and driven. Project development also secured buy-in from relevant regional and local stakeholders to contribute to the project's successful implementation. |
| Project Implementation | | |
| Implementation Approach (Efficiency) | HS | The project was implemented in a highly efficient manner, with excellent financial management. The project management was flexible, and highly effective working relationships were maintained between the project team, UNDP and the NFA. |
| The use of the logical framework | S | The logframe was used as one of the main reference points for ensuring a results-based approach. The logframe was updated and revised as appropriate. |
| Adaptive management | HS | Adaptive management was applied through the re-orientation of project activities related to forest certification, and the project logframe was revised multiple times. The project instituted a highly valuable mechanism in the form of a mid-term adaptive management report, which followed-up on the mid-term evaluation findings. |
| Use/establishment of information technologies | MS | A well-designed website for MMNP was established. The website has greater potential in the realm of supporting tourism and knowledge sharing. The website also requires regular updating. The project effectively used GIS. |

| Project Component or Objective | Rating | Summary |
|---|-----------|---|
| Operational relationships between the institutions involved | HS | Positive working relationships were established between the project team and NFA, and especially between the project team and UNDP. Regular contact was maintained between the two parties, and support was received from the highest levels of UNDP within the country. |
| Technical capacities | S | Individuals involved in project implementation, oversight and management were well-qualified from a technical standpoint (as well as on all other fronts). |
| Monitoring and Evaluation | S | Project monitoring was adequately designed and budgeted, and was well executed. MMNP needs to focus on supporting and implementing a functional, comprehensive, and cost-effective biodiversity monitoring program. |
| Stakeholder Participation | HS | As discussed and explained throughout the evaluation report, stakeholder participation was an excellent aspect of the project, and contributed greatly to project success. |
| Production and dissemination of information | S | GIS-based tourism maps were produced, environmental curricula was produced and adopted by local teachers, and, among other activities, an awareness raising video was produced. Sharing of lessons and good practices could use additional support now that project implementation has ended. |
| Local resource users and NGOs participation | HS | The main NGO in the region was the originator of the project, and a key partner in implementation. Local resource users were also involved through technical support trainings, environmental education and awareness activities, and general consultation through the consultative council. |
| Establishment of partnerships | S | Positive partnerships were established with regional stakeholders through the Maramureş biodiversity consortium. Effective partnerships were also established with NGOs and not-for-profit tourism businesses. |
| Involvement and support of governmental institutions | HS | This was one of the strongest aspects of the project, and was a main contributor to the project's success. |
| Project Results | | |
| Overall Achievement of | HS | The project met, and in some aspects exceeded, |

| Project Component or Objective | Rating | Summary |
|---|-----------|--|
| Objective and Outcomes (Effectiveness) | | the anticipated achievement of outcomes and the project objective. |
| Objective: Biodiversity of MMNP is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model | S | The park administration is effective, and becoming more so, in conserving the MMNP biodiversity through implementation of the management plan. In particular, multiple economic developments in inappropriate areas have been avoided. |
| Outcome 1: Stakeholders make MMNP fully operational | HS | MMNP has been approved and gazetted. The management plan was developed and agreed with all stakeholders through a participatory process. |
| Outcome 2: Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramureş | HS | Multiple measures improving environmental governance have been instituted with the support of regional and local government institutions. |
| Outcome 3: Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP | MS | Important achievements were made to support this outcome, including the excellent TEV study. As identified in the study, there are many opportunities to realize value in MMNP's natural capital, which have only begun to be exploited. |
| Sustainability | L | Although MMNP faces multiple potential risks, these are currently assessed to be at a low level and sustainability of results is considered likely. |
| Financial sustainability | HL | It is anticipated that NFA will continue to provide the operating budget for MMNP. |
| Institutional sustainability | L | The future of the national protected areas agency opens some questions for the future, but currently presents mainly bureaucratic headaches. |
| Socio-economic sustainability | L | There are multiple socio-economic risks, the most notable of which is the land use compensation issue. While this is a very important issue the park administration must continue to address, the actual risk to the sustainability of project results is low. |
| Ecological sustainability | L | The identified environmental risks – illegal logging, water quality, and mining pollution – currently present a low level of risk to the sustainability of project results. All of these issues should continue to be closely monitored. |
| Overall Project Achievement and Impact | HS | |

VIII. List of Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation Terms of Reference

Annex 2: Acronyms

Annex 3: GEF Operational Principles

Annex 4: MMNP Evaluation Matrix and Interview Guide

Annex 5: List of Persons Interviewed

Annex 6: Evaluation Field Visit Schedule

Annex 7: Maramureş Nature Park PIR Summary with Indicators and Level of Achievement

Annex 8: Maramureş Logframe Summary with Assessed Level of Achievement

Annex 9: Project Follow-up to Mid-term Evaluation Recommendations

Annex 10: Evaluation Documentation

Annex 11: Evaluator Curriculum Vitae

Annex 12: Management Response (if any)

A. Annex 1: Evaluation Terms of Reference

Final Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project

“Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in Romania’s Maramureş Nature Park”

I. INTRODUCTION

UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iv) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned. A mix of tools is used to ensure effective project M&E. These might be applied continuously throughout the lifetime of the project – e.g. periodic monitoring of indicators, or as specific time-bound exercises such as mid-term reviews, audit reports and final evaluations.

In accordance with UNDP/GEF M&E policies and procedures, all regular and medium-sized projects supported by the GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of implementation. A final evaluation of a GEF-funded project (or previous phase) is required before a concept proposal for additional funding (or subsequent phases of the same project) can be considered for inclusion in a GEF work program. However, a final evaluation is not an appraisal of the follow-up phase.

Final evaluations are intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at early signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. It will also identify/document lessons learned and make recommendations that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects.

Project objectives

The project seeks to strengthen Romania’s national system of protected areas by demonstrating effective biodiversity conservation in Maramureş Mountains Natural Park in Romania’s northern Carpathian Mountains. The area of the project encompasses approximately 150,000 ha, of which 66% is naturally regenerated forests, 30% meadows and alpine pastures and 4% agricultural lands. With respect to the forestland itself, the Government owns 76,500 ha, private individuals own 3,500 ha and local municipalities own 22,800 ha. It has emerged from and is built upon a notable local stakeholder-driven process that has created an innovative Government-NGO partnership in Maramureş to pursue the conservation and sustainable development of an area comprised of national forestland, protected areas, private forestlands, agricultural land and small urban areas. The project will contribute to the expansion and consolidation of the national system of protected areas by demonstrating effective park management and Government-NGO partnership.

The goal of the project is to strengthen Romania’s national system of protected areas by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramureş demonstration of an effective protected area model.

The objective of the project is to effectively conserve the biodiversity of Maramureş Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains by adopting an effective protected area management model.

Project location: Maramureş Mountains Natural Park

The main expected outcomes of the project are:

- Stakeholders make Maramureş Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational;
- Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramureş;

Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.

The UNDP/GEF project "Strengthening Romania's Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in Romania's Maramureş Nature Park" is a joint initiative of the UNDP and the Government of Romania. It is funded by the GEF and the National Forest Administration was designated as the Implementing Agency for this project.

The Project started in June 2005 and was planned for three years. However, it was extended for one year in September 2006; it will now end in June 2009. It has a budget of USD2.306M of which USD1M is funded by GEF.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

This Final Evaluation is initiated by the UNDP Romania as the Implementation Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers (at the Project Implementation Unit, UNDP Romania Country Office and UNDP/GEF levels) with a comprehensive overall assessment of the project and an opportunity to critically assess administrative and technical strategies, issues and constraints associated with large international and multi-partner initiatives.

The purpose of the Evaluation is:

- To assess overall performance against the Project objectives as set out in Project Document and other related documents

- To assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Project

- To critically analyze the implementation, management and evaluation arrangements of the Project

- To assess the sustainability of the Project's outcomes

- To assess the catalytic or replication effect of the project

- To assess the processes that affected the attainment of the project results

- To present lessons and recommendations on all relevant aspects of the project

Project performance will be measured based on Project's Logical Framework, which provides clear performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification.

The Report of the Final Evaluation will be stand-alone document that substantiates its recommendations and conclusions.

III. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES AND TENTATIVE TIMEFRAME

1. Short strategy and approach of the assignment (max 5 pages), upon the desk review of relevant project documents, to be delivered prior to the in-country mission
2. Draft evaluation report, after the in-country mission
3. Final evaluation report, after the incorporation of stakeholders comments

The Final Evaluation Report should be structured along the following lines:

1. Executive summary
2. Introduction
3. The project(s) and its development context
4. Findings and Conclusions
 - Project formulation
 - Implementation
 - Project Finances
 - Results
5. Recommendations
5. Lessons learned
6. Annexes

The length of report normally should not exceed 50 pages in total. The draft report will be submitted to UNDP/GEF no later than July 20th, 2009. Based on the feedback received from stakeholders a final report will be prepared by August 15th, 2008.

The report will be submitted both electronically and in printed version, in English.

The report will be supplemented by Rating Tables (see Annex III).

Tentative timeframe - Estimated consultancy time = 25 work"days

Briefing of the evaluator and desk review, followed by submission of the short strategy and approach of the assignment (home"based work)

25 May – 14 June

5 days mission to Romania, with a trip to the project site, interviews with stakeholders, questionnaires;

15"20 June

Preparation of the draft evaluation report 21 June – 15 July

Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of the draft evaluation report for comments, (home"based work)

15 July – 20 July

Preparation of final report (home"based"work) 20 July– 15 August

IV. REQUIREMENTS:

The evaluation will be carried out by an International Consultant. The consultant must have not only relevant qualifications but especially prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Former cooperation with GEF/UNDP is an advantage.

The international consultant should possess the following Competencies and Required Skills and Experience:
Competencies:

- (i) The Consultant must have recent experience with result"based management evaluation methodologies
- (ii) The Consultant must have experience in applying participatory monitoring approaches;
- (iii) The Consultant must have experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- (iv) The Consultant must have recent knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
- (v) The Consultant must have recent knowledge of UNDP's results"based evaluation policies and procedures
- (vi) The Consultant must have competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management projects;
- (vii) The Consultant must have expertise in the management and sustainable use of protected areas, desirable in the Central and Eastern Europe and CIS region;
- (viii) It is desirable that the Consultant be familiar with protected area policies and management structures in Romania;
- (ix) It is desirable that the Consultant have demonstrable analytical skills;
- (x) It is desirable that the Consultant have experience with multilateral or bilateral supported conservation projects;
- (xi) It is desirable that the Consultant have knowledge/understanding of Romanian/EU conservation policies and legislation, forestry management policies and institutional system, protected areas system, additional knowledge on NGO/local community would be an asset.

Required Skills and Experience:

Education: Advance degree in environmental/natural sciences or related fields

Work Experience At least 10 years of work experience in relevant areas..

Languages The Consultant must have excellent English oral and written communication skills.

The evaluation will be undertaken in line with GEF principles¹:

Independence

Impartiality

Transparency

Disclosure

Ethical

See p.16 of the GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

Partnership

Competencies and Capacities

Credibility

Utility

The evaluator must be independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance. Therefore applications will not be considered from evaluators who have had any direct involvement with the design or implementation of the project. This may apply equally to evaluators who are associated with organizations, universities or entities that are, or have been, involved in the MMNP policy-making process and/or delivery of the project. Any previous association with the project, the MMNP Administration, the National Forestry Administration, or other partners/stakeholders must be disclosed in the application.

If selected, failure to make the above disclosures will be considered just grounds for immediate contract termination, without recompense. In such circumstances, all notes, reports and other documentation produced by the evaluator will be retained by UNDP.

V. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Evaluation management arrangements

Project Manager (located at the project site) will provide and ensure:

- o Coordination of evaluation activities and logistics at the project sites
- o Arrangement of field site visits
- o Organization of meetings with selected local stakeholders
- o Compiling and providing to the evaluator necessary project reports and materials produced by the project

UNDP will provide and ensure:

- o Coordination of evaluation activities in Bucharest
- o Administrative and logistical support (which includes provision of flight ticket, DSA, terminals) for the evaluator in Bucharest, and logistical arrangements for transportation to the project site

VI. ANNEXES TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Annex I: Scope of Evaluation

Annex II: Methodology

Annex III: Explanation on Terminology Provided in the GEF Guidelines to Terminal Evaluations

Annex IV: Financial Planning Co-financing

Annex V: Rating Tables

Annex VI: List of Documents to be reviewed by the evaluators

VII. EVALUATION OF APPLICANTS

The selection of the successful candidate will be based on a competitive process taking into account the:

- Qualifications and experience of the candidate, and
- Financial offer.

A cumulative analysis will be utilized in evaluating the candidates, through a two-stage procedure.

In the first stage, qualifications and working experience of short-listed candidates will be evaluated in view of responsiveness to the Terms of Reference (TOR).

A technically qualified and responsive candidate will be considered the one passing the minimum technical score of 49 points (=70%) of the maximum obtainable technical score of 70 points.

In the second stage, only the qualified and responsive candidates (those passing the minimum 49 points) will be contacted and requested to provide their financial offers.

A maximum of 30 points will be assigned to the lowest price offer.

All other price offers will receive points in inverse proportion, using the formula:

Financial score offer X = $30 \times (\text{lowest price} / \text{price offer X})$

Technical Criteria

| TOTAL | Technical | Financial | Offer | Total score | Experience in evaluation in thematic fields of the project | Work experience with UNDP | GEF | General qualifications, skills and experience | Maximum points obtainable |
|-------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------------|--|---------------------------|-----|---|---------------------------|
| 30 | 10 | 70 | 30 | 100 | | | | | 30 |

The candidate obtaining the highest cumulative score (technical + financial) will be considered as offering best value for money.

Reference checks on the successful candidate will be performed by UNDP as mandatory process prior to the award of contract.

The applications must be sent:

" by e-mail to procurement.ro@undp.org

" or by fax to 0212017828

Applications should indicate: "Evaluator / Maramureş project"

The deadline for submitting applications is 18 May 2009.

Women candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

Incomplete applications and/or applications received after the deadline shall not be taken into consideration.

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

Annex 1. Scope of the Evaluation. Specific Issues to Be Addressed.

This section describes the categories that the evaluation will look into in line with the evaluation report outline included in section III. It also highlights specific issues to be addressed under each broad category.

1. Executive summary

Brief description of the project

Context and purpose of the evaluation

Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

2. Introduction

Project background

Purpose of the evaluation

Key issues addressed

The outputs of the evaluation and how will they be used

Methodology of the evaluation

Structure of the evaluation

3. The project and its development context

Project start and its duration

Problems that the project seek to address

Immediate and development objectives of the project

Main stakeholders

Results expected

4. Findings and Conclusions

In addition to a descriptive assessment, all criteria marked with (R) should be rated using the following divisions:
Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory

4.1. Project Formulation

Conceptualization/Design (R). This should assess the approach used in design and an appreciation of the appropriateness of problem conceptualization and whether the selected intervention strategy addressed the root causes and principal threats in the project area. It should also include an assessment of the logical framework and whether the different project components and activities proposed to achieve the objective were appropriate, viable and responded to contextual institutional, legal and regulatory settings of the project. It should also assess the indicators defined for guiding implementation and measurement of achievement and whether lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) were incorporated into project design.

Country"ownership/Driveness. Assess the extent to which the project idea/conceptualization had its origin within national, sectoral and development plans and focuses on national environment and development interests.

Stakeholder participation (R) Assess information dissemination, consultation, and "stakeholder" participation in design stages.

Replication approach. Determine the ways in which lessons and experiences coming out of the project were/are to be replicated or scaled up in the design and implementation of other projects (this also related to actual practices undertaken during implementation).

Cost-effectiveness

UNDP comparative advantage

Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector

Management arrangements

4.2. Project Implementation

Implementation Approach (R). This should include assessments of the following aspects:

(i) The use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and any changes made to this as a response to changing conditions and/or feedback from M and E activities if required.

(ii) Other elements that indicate adaptive management such as comprehensive and realistic work plans routinely developed that reflect adaptive management and/or; changes in management arrangements to enhance implementation.

(iii) The project's use/establishment of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities.

(iv) The general operational relationships between the institutions involved and others and how these relationships have contributed to effective implementation and achievement of project objectives.

(v) Technical capacities associated with the project and their role in project development, management and achievements.

Monitoring and evaluation (R). Including an assessment as to whether there has been adequate periodic oversight of activities during implementation to establish the extent to which inputs, work schedules, other required actions and outputs are proceeding according to plan; whether formal evaluations have been held and whether action has been taken on the results of this monitoring oversight and evaluation reports.

Stakeholder participation (R). This should include assessments of the mechanisms for information dissemination in project implementation and the extent of stakeholder participation in management, emphasizing the following:

- (i) The production and dissemination of information generated by the project.
- (ii) Local resource users and NGOs participation in project implementation and decision making and an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project in this arena.
- (iii) The establishment of partnerships and collaborative relationships developed by the project with local, national and international entities and the effects they have had on project implementation.
- (iv) Involvement of governmental institutions in project implementation, the extent of governmental support of the project.

Risk management

Coordination and operational issues

4.3 Project Finances

Financial Planning: Including an assessment of:

- (i) The actual project cost by objectives, outputs, activities
- (ii) The cost-effectiveness of achievements
- (iii) Financial management (including disbursement issues)
- (iv) Co-financing 2

Budget procedure

Disbursement

Effectiveness of funding mechanism

Risks

Sustainability. Extent to which the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project domain, after it has come to an end. Relevant factors include for example: development of a sustainability strategy, establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms, mainstreaming project objectives into the economy or community production activities.

Execution and implementation modalities. This should consider the effectiveness of the UNDP counterpart and Project Co-ordination Unit participation in selection, recruitment, assignment of experts, consultants and national counterpart staff members and in the definition of tasks and responsibilities; quantity, quality and timeliness of inputs for the project with respect to execution responsibilities, enactment of necessary legislation and budgetary provisions and extent to which these may have affected implementation and sustainability of the Project; quality and timeliness of inputs by UNDP and other parties responsible for providing inputs to the project, and the extent to which this may have affected the smooth implementation of the project.

2 Please see guidelines at the end of Annex III of these TORs for reporting of co-financing

4.3. Results

Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objectives (R): Including a description and rating of the extent to which the project's objectives (environmental and developmental) were achieved using Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory ratings. If the project did not establish a baseline (initial conditions), the evaluators should seek to determine it through the use of special methodologies so that achievements, results and impacts can be properly established.

Sustainability: Including an appreciation of the extent to which benefits continue, within or outside the project domain after GEF assistance/external assistance in this phase has come to an end.

Contribution to upgrading skills of the national staff

5. Recommendations

Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project

Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project

Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

6. Lessons learned This should highlight the best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success.

7. Evaluation report Annexes

Evaluation TORs

Itinerary

List of persons interviewed

Summary of field visits

List of documents reviewed

Questionnaire used and summary of results

Comments by stakeholders (only in case of discrepancies with evaluation findings and conclusions)

Annex 2. Methodology for Project Evaluation

The Final Evaluation will be done through a combination of processes including a desk study, selected site visits and interviews " involving all stakeholders such as: National Forest Administration, UNDP, Government officials on different levels, Regional administrations and local municipalities, NGO's, communities etc.

The evaluator should seek guidance for his/her work from the following materials:

GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy

(<http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html>)

UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (<http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>)

Measuring Results of the GEF Biodiversity Programme

(http://www.undp.org/gef/05/documents/me/Measuring_the_Results_of_Biodiversity.pdf)

The methodology for the evaluation is envisaged to cover the following areas:

Desk study review of all relevant Project documentation

Consultations with National Forest Administration (Romsilva) , UNDP , Project implementation unit

Field site visit within project site;

Interviews with stakeholders (suggestions):

- o National Forest Administration (Romsilva)
- o The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development,
- o Baia Mare Forestry Directorate – Maramureş Mountains Natural Park Administration
- o Ministry of Environment
- o National GEF OFP/PFP
- o UNDP Romania (Bucharest)
- o UNDP/GEF Regional Center for Europe and CIS (Bratislava)
- o Local Municipalities
- o Local community representatives
- o NGO's and educational institutions from Maramureş region
- o Local forestry businesses and private sector stakeholders

Annex 3. Explanation on Terminology Provided in the GEF Guidelines to Terminal Evaluations

Implementation Approach includes an analysis of the project's logical framework, adaptation to changing conditions (adaptive management), partnerships in implementation arrangements, changes in project design, and overall project management.

Some elements of an effective implementation approach may include:

The logical framework used during implementation as a management and M&E tool

Effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders

involved in the country/region

- Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project implementation
- Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management.

Country Ownership/Driveness is the relevance of the project to national development and environmental agendas, recipient country commitment, and regional and international agreements where applicable. Project Concept has its origin within the national sectoral and development plans

Some elements of effective country ownership/driveness may include:

- Project Concept has its origin within the national sectoral and development plans
- Outcomes (or potential outcomes) from the project have been incorporated into the national sectoral and development plans
- Relevant country representatives (e.g., governmental official, civil society, etc.) are actively involved in project identification, planning and/or implementation
- The recipient government has maintained financial commitment to the project
- The government has approved policies and/or modified regulatory frameworks in line with the project's objectives

For projects whose main focus and actors are in the private"sector rather than public"sector (e.g., IFC projects), elements of effective country ownership/driveness that demonstrate the interest and commitment of the local private sector to the project may include:

- The number of companies that participated in the project by: receiving technical assistance, applying for financing, attending dissemination events, adopting environmental standards promoted by the project, etc.
- Amount contributed by participating companies to achieve the environmental benefits promoted by the project, including: equity invested, guarantees provided, co"funding of project activities, in"kind contributions, etc.
- Project's collaboration with industry associations

Stakeholder Participation/Public Involvement consists of three related, and often overlapping processes: information dissemination, consultation, and "stakeholder" participation. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, institutions, or other bodies that have an interest or stake in the outcome of the GEF"financed project. The term also applies to those potentially adversely affected by a project.

Examples of effective public involvement include:

- Information dissemination
- Implementation of appropriate outreach/public awareness campaigns

Consultation and stakeholder participation

- Consulting and making use of the skills, experiences and knowledge of NGOs, community and local groups, the private and public sectors, and academic institutions in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities

Stakeholder participation

- Project institutional networks well placed within the overall national or community organizational structures, for example, by building on the local decision making structures, incorporating local knowledge, and devolving project management responsibilities to the local organizations or communities as the project approaches closure
- Building partnerships among different project stakeholders
- Fulfillment of commitments to local stakeholders and stakeholders considered to be adequately involved.

Sustainability measures the extent to which benefits continue, within or outside the project domain, from a particular project or program after GEF assistance/external assistance has come to an end. Relevant factors to improve the sustainability of project outcomes include:

- Development and implementation of a sustainability strategy.

Establishment of the financial and economic instruments and mechanisms to ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the GEF assistance ends (from the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and market transformations to promote the project's objectives).

Development of suitable organizational arrangements by public and/or private sector.

Development of policy and regulatory frameworks that further the project objectives.

Incorporation of environmental and ecological factors affecting future flow of benefits.

Development of appropriate institutional capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc.) .

Identification and involvement of champions (i.e. individuals in government and civil society who can promote sustainability of project outcomes).

Achieving social sustainability, for example, by mainstreaming project activities into the economy or community production activities.

Achieving stakeholders consensus regarding courses of action on project activities.

Replication approach, in the context of GEF projects, is defined as lessons and experiences coming out of the project that are replicated or scaled up in the design and implementation of other projects. Replication can have two aspects, replication proper (lessons and experiences are replicated in different geographic area) or scaling up (lessons and experiences are replicated within the same geographic area but funded by other sources). Examples of replication approaches include:

Knowledge transfer (i.e., dissemination of lessons through project result documents, training workshops, information exchange, a national and regional forum, etc).

Expansion of demonstration projects.

Capacity building and training of individuals, and institutions to expand the project's achievements in the country or other regions.

Use of project-trained individuals, institutions or companies to replicate the project's outcomes in other regions.

Financial Planning includes actual project cost by activity, financial management (including disbursement issues), and co-financing. If a financial audit has been conducted the major findings should be presented in the TE. Effective financial plans include:

Identification of potential sources of co-financing as well as leveraged and associated financing.

Strong financial controls, including reporting, and planning that allow the project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget at any time, allows for a proper and timely flow of funds, and for the payment of satisfactory project deliverables

Due diligence due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits.

Co financing includes: Grants, Loans/Concessional (compared to market rate), Credits, Equity investments, In-kind support, Other contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries. Please refer to Council documents on co-financing for definitions, such as GEF/C.20/6.

Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector. Please briefly describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective.

Cost-effectiveness assesses the achievement of the environmental and developmental objectives as well as the project's outputs in relation to the inputs, costs, and implementing time. It also examines the project's compliance with the application of the incremental cost concept. Cost-effective factors include:

Compliance with the incremental cost criteria (e.g. GEF funds are used to finance a component of a project that would not have taken place without GEF funding.) and securing co-funding and associated funding.

The project completed the planned activities and met or exceeded the expected outcomes in terms of achievement of Global Environmental and Development Objectives according to schedule, and as cost" effective as initially planned.

The project used either a benchmark approach or a comparison approach (did not exceed the costs levels of similar projects in similar contexts)

Monitoring & Evaluation. Monitoring is the periodic oversight of a process, or the implementation of an activity, which seeks to establish the extent to which inputs, work schedules, other required actions and outputs are proceeding according to plan, so that timely action can be taken to correct the deficiencies detected. Evaluation is a process by which program inputs, activities and results are analyzed and judged explicitly against benchmarks or baseline conditions using performance indicators. This will allow project managers and planners to make decisions based on the evidence of information on the project implementation stage, performance indicators, level of funding still available, etc, building on the project's logical framework.

Monitoring and Evaluation includes activities to measure the project's achievements such as identification of performance indicators, measurement procedures, and determination of baseline conditions. Projects are required to implement plans for monitoring and evaluation with adequate funding and appropriate staff and include activities such as description of data sources and methods for data collection, collection of baseline data, and stakeholder participation. Given the long"term nature of many GEF projects, projects are also encouraged to include long"term monitoring plans that are sustainable after project.

Please refer to Council documents on co-financing for definitions, such as GEF/C.20/6. The following page presents a table to be used for reporting co-financing.

Annex 4. Financial Planning Cofinancing

* Other is referred to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

Leveraged Resources

Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in"kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector. Please briefly describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective.

Annex 5. Rating Tables

PROJECT RATINGS Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Marginally Satisfactory (MS), and Unsatisfactory (U)

PROJECT COMPONENT OR OBJECTIVE RATING SCALE RATING U MS S HS

PROJECT FORMULATION

Conceptualization/Design

Stakeholder participation

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Approach

The use of the logical framework

Adaptive management

Use/establishment of information technologies

Operational relationships between the institutions involved

Technical capacities

Monitoring and evaluation

Stakeholder participation

Production and dissemination of information

Local resource users and NGOs participation

Establishment of partnerships

Involvement and support of governmental institutions

PROJECT RESULTS

Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objectives

Achievement of objective

Outcome 1

Outcome 2

Outcome 3

OVERALL PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT & IMPACT

Annex 6. List of documents to be reviewed by the Evaluator

Following documents can be used as a basis for evaluation of the project:

Document Description

Project document The Project Document and Revisions

Project reports Project Inception Report

Mid-term Evaluation Report

Annual Project Report to GEF Project Implementation Reports for
2006,2007,2008

Other relevant materials Financial Audit Reports 2007,2008

Mission Reports of International Experts

Maps

Various database

Research results

Minutes of Project Oversight Committee Meetings

B. Annex 2: Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| CBD | United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency (of Maramureş County) |
| EU | European Union |
| FSC | Forest Stewardship Council |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| GIS | Global Information Systems |
| GPS | Global Positioning Systems |
| INTBAU | International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism |
| IUCN | World Conservation Union |
| MESD | Ministry of Education and Sustainable Development |
| MMNP | Maramureş Mountains Nature Park |
| MoE | Ministry of Environment |
| MSP | Medium-sized Project |
| M&E | Monitoring and evaluation |
| NFA | National Forest Agency |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| NTFPs | Non-timber forest products |
| PDF-A | Project Development Facility Block A (from the GEF) |
| TEV | Total Economic Value |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| USD | United States dollars |
| WWF | World Wildlife Fund |

C. Annex 3: GEF Operational Principles

<http://www.gefweb.org/public/opstrat/ch1.htm>

TEN OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GEF'S WORK PROGRAM

1. For purposes of the financial mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the GEF will **function under the guidance of, and be accountable to, the Conference of the Parties (COPs)**. For purposes of financing activities in the focal area of ozone layer depletion, GEF operational policies will be consistent with those of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its amendments.
2. The GEF will provide new, and additional, grant and concessional funding to meet the agreed **incremental costs** of measures to achieve agreed global environmental benefits.
3. The GEF will ensure the **cost-effectiveness** of its activities to maximize global environmental benefits.
4. The GEF will fund projects that are **country-driven** and based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development, as identified within the context of national programs.
5. The GEF will maintain sufficient **flexibility** to respond to changing circumstances, including evolving guidance of the Conference of the Parties and experience gained from monitoring and evaluation activities.
6. GEF projects will provide for **full disclosure** of all non-confidential information.
7. GEF projects will provide for consultation with, and **participation** as appropriate of, the beneficiaries and affected groups of people.
8. GEF projects will conform to the **eligibility** requirements set forth in paragraph 9 of the GEF Instrument.
9. In seeking to maximize global environmental benefits, the GEF will emphasize its **catalytic role** and leverage additional financing from other sources.
10. The GEF will ensure that its programs and projects are **monitored and evaluated** on a regular basis.

D. Annex 4: MMNP Evaluation Matrix and Interview Guide

MMNP Evaluation Matrix

| Evaluation Criteria | Key Questions | Indicators | Potential Sources | Methodological Approach |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| I. Relevance: By effectively conserving biodiversity of Maramureș Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains, how does the project support and contribute to the objectives of the UNCBD and GEF focal areas, and to environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels? | | | | |
| Is the project relevant to UNCBD and other international convention objectives? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support the objectives of the UNCBD? Does the project support other international conventions, such as the Carpathian Convention and the UNFCCC? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNCBD priorities and areas of work incorporated in project design Level of implementation of UNCBD in Romania, and contribution of the project Priorities and areas of work of other conventions incorporated in project design Extent to which the project is actually implemented in line with incremental cost argument | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National policies and strategies to implement the UNCBD, other international conventions, or related to environment more generally UNCBD and other international convention web sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews with project team, UNDP and other partners |
| Is the project relevant to the GEF biodiversity focal area? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support the GEF biodiversity focal area and strategic priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a clear relationship between the project objectives and GEF biodiversity focal area Identified project contribution to GEF biodiversity strategic priorities' portfolio targets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents GEF focal areas strategies and documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review GEF website Interviews with UNDP and project team |
| Is the project relevant to Romania's environment and sustainable development objectives? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support the environment and sustainable development objectives of Romania? Is the project country-driven? What was the level of stakeholder participation in project design? What was the level of stakeholder ownership in implementation? Does the project adequately take into account the national realities of institutional and policy frameworks in its design and implementation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which the project supports national environmental objectives Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies Appreciation from national stakeholders with respect to adequacy of project design and implementation to national realities and existing capacities Level of involvement of government officials and other partners in the project design process Coherence between needs expressed by national stakeholders and UNDP-GEF criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National policies and strategies Key project partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews with UNDP and project partners |
| Is the project addressing the needs of target beneficiaries at the local and regional levels? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support the needs of relevant stakeholders? Has the implementation of the project been inclusive of all relevant stakeholders? Were local beneficiaries and stakeholders adequately involved in project design and implementation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of the link between expected results from the project and the needs of relevant stakeholders Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of stakeholders in project design and implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project partners and stakeholders Needs assessment studies Project documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews with relevant stakeholders |
| Is the project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there logical linkages between expected results of the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project expected results and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program and project documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review |

| Evaluation Criteria | Key Questions | Indicators | Potential Sources | Methodological Approach |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| internally coherent in its design? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> project (logframe) and the project design (in terms of project components, choice of partners, structure, delivery mechanism, scope, budget, use of resources etc)? Is the length of the project sufficient to achieve project outcomes? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> project design internal logic Level of coherence between project design and project implementation approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key project stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews |
| How is the project relevant with respect to other donor-supported activities? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the GEF funding support activities and objectives not addressed by other donors? How do GEF-funds help to fill gaps (or give additional stimulus) that are necessary but are not covered by other donors? Is there coordination and complementarity between donors? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which program was coherent and complementary to other donor programming nationally and regionally | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents from other donor supported activities Other donor websites and representatives Project documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews with project partners and relevant stakeholders |
| Does the project provide relevant lessons and experiences for other similar projects in the future? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the experience of the project provided relevant lessons for other future projects targeted at similar objectives? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis |

II. Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards?

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Was project support provided in an efficient way? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use? Did the project logical framework and work plans and any changes made to them use as management tools during implementation? Were the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for project management and producing accurate and timely financial information? Were progress and other reports produced accurately, timely and responded to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes? Was project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual) Did the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happen as planned? Were financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently? Was procurement carried out in a manner making efficient use of project resources? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability and quality of financial and progress reports Timeliness and adequacy of reporting provided Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures Planned vs. actual funds leveraged Cost in view of results achieved compared to costs of similar projects from other organizations Adequacy of project choices in view of existing context, infrastructure and cost Quality of results-based management reporting (progress reporting, monitoring and evaluation) Occurrence of change in project design/ implementation approach (i.e. restructuring) when needed to improve project efficiency Cost associated with delivery mechanism and management structure compare to alternatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP Project team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Evaluation Criteria | Key Questions | Indicators | Potential Sources | Methodological Approach |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was results-based management used during project implementation? | | | |
| How efficient are partnership arrangements for the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent partnerships/linkages between institutions/organizations were encouraged and supported? Which partnerships/linkages were facilitated? Which ones can be considered sustainable? What was the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? Which methods were successful or not and why? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific activities conducted to support the development of cooperative arrangements between partners, Examples of supported partnerships Evidence that particular partnerships/linkages will be sustained Types/quality of partnership cooperation methods utilized | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Project partners and relevant stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews |
| Did the project efficiently utilize local capacity in implementation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity? Did the project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the project? Was there an effective collaboration between institutions responsible for implementing the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of expertise utilized from international experts compared to national experts Number/quality of analyses done to assess local capacity potential and absorptive capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews |
| What lessons can be drawn regarding efficiency for other similar projects in the future? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons can be learnt from the project regarding efficiency? How could the project have more efficiently carried out implementation (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc.)? What changes could have been made (if any) to the project in order to improve its efficiency? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis |
| III. Effectiveness: To what extent have/will the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been/be achieved? | | | | |
| Has the project been effective in achieving the expected outcomes and objectives? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project been effective in achieving its expected outcomes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To institute a management regime for Maramureş Mountains Natural Park 2. To improve environmental governance in the Maramureş region 3. For stakeholders to realize the economic value of the natural park resources through sustainable development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See indicators in project document results framework and logframe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project team and relevant stakeholders Data reported in project annual and quarterly reports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analysis Interviews with project team Interviews with relevant stakeholders |
| How was risk and risk mitigation managed? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well were risks, assumptions and impact drivers managed? What was the quality of risk mitigation strategies developed? Were these sufficient? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completeness of risk identification and assumptions during project planning and design Quality of existing information systems in place to identify emerging risks and other issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents UNDP, project team, and relevant stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews |

| Evaluation Criteria | Key Questions | Indicators | Potential Sources | Methodological Approach |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there clear strategies for risk mitigation related with long-term sustainability of the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of risk mitigations strategies developed and followed | | |
| What lessons can be drawn regarding effectiveness for other similar projects in the future? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons have been learned from the project regarding achievement of outcomes? What changes could have been made (if any) to the design of the project in order to improve the achievement of the project's expected results? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis |
| IV. Results: What are the current actual, and potential long-term, results from activities supported by the project? | | | | |
| How is the project effective in achieving its long-term objectives? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the project achieve its overall objective of "The biodiversity of Maramureş Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model"? Is the globally significant biodiversity of the target area likely to be conserved? What barriers remain to achieving long-term objectives, or what necessary steps remain to be taken by stakeholders to achieve sustained impacts and Global Environmental Benefits? Are impacts or anticipated impacts at a scale to be considered Global Environmental Benefits? Are there unanticipated results achieved or contributed to by the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To pool/mobilize resources In protected area management effectiveness For related policy making and strategic planning For environmental governance in the project area Change in use and implementation of sustainable livelihoods Change in the number and strength of barriers such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge about biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources, and economic incentives in these areas Cross-institutional coordination and inter-sectoral dialogue Knowledge of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use practices by end users | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Key stakeholders Monitoring data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analysis Meetings with UNDP, project team and project partners Interviews with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders |
| How is the project effective in achieving the objectives of the UNCBD? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the impacts or likely impacts of the project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the local/regional environment On economic development On other socio-economic issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide specific examples of impacts at species, ecosystem or genetic levels, as relevant Provide data on economic benefits from sustainable use of biodiversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents UNCDB documents Key Stakeholders Monitoring data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis Interviews with key stakeholders |
| Future directions for results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can the project build on its successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis |

| Evaluation Criteria | Key Questions | Indicators | Potential Sources | Methodological Approach |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| V. Sustainability: Are the conditions in place for project-related benefits and results to be sustained, and what are the current risks to sustainability? | | | | |
| Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in project design? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project have a sustainability strategy incorporated into design and implementation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence / effectiveness of sustainability strategy Evidence / effectiveness of steps taken to ensure sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP and project personnel and project partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews |
| Financial sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project adequately address financial and economic risks to sustainability? Do certain aspects of project results require ongoing financial support? Are any recurrent costs after project completion sustainable? Are any financial resources expected after project completion adequate? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level and source of future financial support for protected area management after the project ends Evidence of commitments from international partners, governments or other stakeholders to financially support relevant sectors of activities after project end Level of recurrent costs after completion of project and funding sources for those recurrent costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP and project personnel and project partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews |
| Institutional and governance sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there identified institutional or governance risks to the sustainability of project results? Were project results integrated by partner organizations, institutions, and government bodies into their internal systems and procedures? Is there evidence that project partners will continue their activities beyond project support? What degree is there of local ownership of initiatives and results? Were laws, policies and frameworks addressed through the project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms? Are laws, policies and frameworks address through the project implemented and enforced? What is the level of political commitment to build on the results of the project? Are there policies or practices in place that create perverse incentives that would negatively affect long-term benefits? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which project activities and results have been taken over by local counterparts or institutions/organizations Efforts to support the development of relevant laws and policies State of enforcement and law making capacity Evidences of commitment by government enactment of laws and resource allocation to priorities Quality of governance at local, regional and national levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP and project personnel and project partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews |
| Social-economic sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project contribute to key building blocks for socio-economic sustainability? Did the project contribute to local stakeholders' acceptance of MMNP as a protected area? Are there adequate market opportunities and incentives to ensure sustained environmental and economic benefits achieved through the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example of contributions to sustainable socio-economic changes in support of national development goals and strategies Examples of contributions to sustainable socio-economic changes in support of the objectives of the UNCBD and other conventions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, project personnel and project partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review |

| Evaluation Criteria | Key Questions | Indicators | Potential Sources | Methodological Approach |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Environmental sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there risks to the environmental benefits that were created or that are expected to occur? Are there long-term environmental threats that have not been addressed by the project? Have any new environmental threats emerged in the project's lifetime? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of potential threats such as infrastructure development Assessment of unaddressed or emerging threats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Threat assessments Government documents or other external published information UNDP, project personnel and project partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review |
| Individual, institutional and systemic capacity development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the capacity in place at the regional, national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of the results achieved to date? Were the necessary related capacities for policy creation and enforcement built? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elements in place in those different management functions, at the appropriate levels (regional, national and local) in terms of adequate structures, strategies, systems, skills, incentives and interrelationships with other key actors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents UNDP, project personnel and project partners Beneficiaries Capacity assessments available, if any | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review |
| Replication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were project activities and results replicated nationally and / or scaled up? Was the project contribution to replication or scaling up actively or passively promoted? Were project activities and results replicated or scaled-up in other countries? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent /quality of replicated initiatives Scale of additional investment leveraged | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other donor programming documents Beneficiaries UNDP, project personnel and project partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews |
| Barriers to sustainability of project results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of results? Have any of these been addressed through project management? What could be the possible measures to further contribute to the sustainability of efforts achieved with the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in view of building blocks of sustainability as presented above Recent changes which may present new challenges to sustainability of results | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Beneficiaries UNDP, project personnel and project partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews |
| Future directions for sustainability and a catalytic role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which project results show the strongest potential for lasting long-term benefits? What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of the project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed? How can the experience and good project practices influence the strategies for biodiversity conservation through an effective protected area management model? Are national decision-making institutions prepared to continue improving their strategy for effective biodiversity conservation in MMNP and throughout Romania's protected area system? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis |

MMNP Terminal Evaluation Interview Guide

***Overview:** The questions under each topic area are intended to assist in focusing discussion to ensure consistent topic coverage and to structure data collection, and are not intended as verbatim questions to be posed to interviewees. When using the interview guide, the interviewer should be sure to target questions at a level appropriate to the interviewee. The interview guide is one of multiple tools for gathering evaluative evidence, to complement evidence collected through document reviews and other data collection methods; in other words, the interview guide does not cover all evaluative questions relevant to the evaluation.*

Key

Bold = GEF Evaluation Criteria

Italic = GEF Operational Principles

I. PLANNING / PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

A. **Relevance**

- i. Did the project's objectives conform to the priorities of the local government and local communities?
- ii. Did the project's objectives conform to national priorities?

B. *Incremental cost*

- i. Did the project create environmental benefits that would not have otherwise taken place?
- ii. Does the project area represent an example of a globally significant environmental resource?

C. *Country-drivenness / Participation*

- i. How did the project concept originate?
- ii. How did the project stakeholders contribute to the project development?
- iii. Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project?
- iv. Do the local communities support the objectives of the project?
- v. Are the project objectives in conflict with any national level policies?

D. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan / Design (*M&E*)

- i. Were monitoring and reporting roles clearly defined?
- ii. Was there either an environmental or socio-economic baseline of data collected before the project began?

II. MANAGEMENT / OVERSIGHT

A. Project management

- i. What were the implementation arrangements?
- ii. Was the management effective?
- iii. Were workplans prepared as required to achieve the anticipated outputs on the required timeframes?

- iv. Did the project develop and leverage the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
 - v. Were there any particular challenges with the management process?
 - vi. If there was a steering or oversight body, did it meet as planned and provide the anticipated input and support to project management?
 - vii. Were risks adequately assessed during implementation?
 - viii. Did assumptions made during project design hold true?
 - ix. Were assessed risks adequately dealt with?
 - x. Was the level of communication and support from the implementing agency adequate and appropriate?
- B. Flexibility**
- i. Did the project have to undertake any adaptive management measures based on feedback received from the M&E process?
 - ii. Were there other ways in which the project demonstrated flexibility?
 - iii. Were there any challenges faced in this area?
- C. Efficiency (cost-effectiveness)**
- i. Was the project cost-effective?
 - ii. Were expenditures and procurement in line with international standards and norms?
 - iii. Was the project implementation delayed?
 - iv. If so, did that affect cost-effectiveness?
 - v. What was the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation?
 - vi. To what extent did the project leverage additional resources?
- D. Financial Management**
- i. Was the project financing (from the GEF and other partners) at the level foreseen in the project document?
 - ii. Were there any problems with disbursements between implementing and executing agencies?
 - iii. Were financial audits conducted with the regularity and rigor required by the implementing agency?
 - iv. Was financial reporting regularly completed at the required standards and level of detail?
 - v. Did the project face any particular financial challenges such as unforeseen tax liabilities, management costs, or currency devaluation?
- E. Co-financing (catalytic role)**
- i. Was the cash and in-kind co-financing received at the level anticipated in the project document?
 - ii. Did the project receive any additional unanticipated cash or in-kind support after approval?
- F. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**
- i. Project implementation M&E
 - a. Was the M&E plan adequate and implemented sufficiently to allow the project to recognize and address challenges?

- b. Were any unplanned M&E measures undertaken to meet unforeseen shortcomings?
 - c. Was there a mid-term evaluation?
 - d. How were project reporting and monitoring tools used to support adaptive management?
 - ii. Environmental and socio-economic monitoring
 - a. Did the project implement a monitoring system, or leverage a system already in place, for environmental monitoring?
 - b. What are the environmental or socio-economic monitoring mechanisms?
 - c. Have any community-based monitoring mechanisms been used?
 - d. Is there a long-term M&E component to track environmental changes?
 - e. If so, what provisions have been made to ensure this is carried out?
- E. *Full disclosure*
 - i. Did the project meet this requirement?
 - ii. Did the project face any challenges in this area?

III. ACTIVITIES / IMPLEMENTATION

A. **Effectiveness**

- i. How have the stated project objectives been met?
- ii. To what extent have the project objectives been met?
- iii. What were the key factors that contributed to project success or underachievement?
- iv. Can positive key factors be replicated in other situations, and could negative key factors have been anticipated?

B. Stakeholder involvement and public awareness (*participation*)

- i. What were the achievements in this area?
- ii. What were the challenges in this area?
- iii. How did stakeholder involvement and public awareness contribute to the achievement of project objectives?

IV. RESULTS

A. Outputs

- i. Did the project achieve the planned outputs?
- ii. Did the outputs contribute to the project outcomes and objectives?

B. Outcomes

- i. Were the anticipated outcomes achieved?
- ii. Were the outcomes relevant to the planned project impacts?

C. Impacts and Global Environmental Benefits

- i. Was there a logical flow of inputs and activities to outputs, from outputs to outcomes, and then to impacts?
- ii. Did the project achieve its anticipated/planned impacts?
- iii. Why or why not?

- iv. If impacts were achieved, were they at a scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits?
 - v. If impacts or Global Environmental Benefits have not yet been achieved, are the conditions (enabling environment) in place so that they are likely to eventually be achieved?
 - D. Replication strategy, and documented replication or scaling-up (*catalytic role*)
 - i. Did the project have a replication plan?
 - ii. Was the replication plan “passive” or “active”?
 - iii. Is there evidence that replication or scaling-up occurred within the country?
 - iv. Did replication or scaling-up occur in other countries?
- V. LESSONS LEARNED
 - A. What were the key lessons learned in each project stage?
 - B. In retrospect, would the project participants have done anything differently?
- VI. SUSTAINABILITY
 - A. Financial
 - i. To what extent are the outcomes dependent on continued financial support?
 - ii. Do “results owners” have the necessary resources to continue their efforts?
 - iii. What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project outcomes/benefits once the GEF assistance ends?
 - iv. Was the project successful in identifying and leveraging co-financing?
 - v. What are the key financial risks to sustainability?
 - B. Socio-Economic
 - i. To what extent are the outcomes dependent on socio-economic factors?
 - ii. What is the likelihood that the level of stakeholder ownership will allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained?
 - iii. Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project?
 - iv. What are the key socio-economic risks to sustainability?
 - C. Institutions and Governance
 - i. To what extent are the outcomes of the project dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?
 - ii. What is the likelihood that institutional and technical achievements, legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes will allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained?
 - iii. Are the required systems for accountability and transparency and the required technical know-how in place?
 - iv. What are the key institutional and governance risks to sustainability?
 - D. Ecological
 - i. Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits?

Interview Guide Appendix: GEF Evaluation Criteria and Key Definitions

Evaluation Criteria

Relevance: The extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time.

Effectiveness: The extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved.

Efficiency: The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible. Also called cost-effectiveness or efficacy.

Results: The positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes to and effects produced by a development intervention. In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short- to medium term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other, local effects.

Sustainability: The likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable.

Key Definitions

Output: Tangible product (including services) of an intervention that is directly attributable to the initiative. Outputs relate to the completion (rather than the conduct) of activities and are the type of results over which managers have most influence. An example of an output for a GEF biodiversity project is a training session held in environmental monitoring, or an environmental education video.

Outcome: Actual or intended changes in capacity, behavior, awareness, knowledge or other condition that an intervention(s) seeks to address. Using the same example, an outcome could be the implementation of a community-based monitoring program, or an increase in awareness about a particular environmental issue.

Impact: Actual or intended changes in environmental status as measured by broadly accepted indicators, such as keystone species' population trends, species density, ecosystem extent or quality (or rate of expansion / contraction), etc.

E. Annex 5: List of Persons Interviewed

Bucharest, Romania

Ms. Monica Moldovan, *Energy and Environment Program Officer, UNDP Romania*
 Ms. Corina Murafa, *Programme Assistant, Energy and Environment Section, UNDP Romania*
 Mr. Dragos Mihai, *Head of International Cooperation Department, National Forestry Association, Project Director*
 Mr. Mircea Verghet, *Head of Protected Areas Unit, National Forestry Association*
 Mr. Mihai Zotta, *Protected Areas Unit, National Forestry Association*
 Professor Dan Manoleli, *Romanian National Biodiversity Expert*
 Ms. Florina Ciubuc, *Head of Biodiversity Unit, Nature Protection Division, Ministry of Environment*
 Mrs. Maria Elena Teodorescu, *Vice President, National Environmental Protection Agency, Ministry of Environment, GEF Operational Focal Point*

Maramureş Mountains Nature Park, Maramureş County, Romania

Mr. Costel Bucur, *MMNP Project Manager / Park Manager, Maramureş Mountains Natural Park*
 Mr. Alin Birda, *MMNP Project Chief Accountant*
 Ms. Monica Gal, *Park Ranger, Maramureş Mountains Natural Park*
 Mr. Ioan Pop, *Park Ranger, Maramureş Mountains Natural Park*
 Ms. Ioana Danci, *Biologist, Maramureş Mountains Natural Park*
 Mr. Cristian Cornea, *Maramureş District, National Forestry Association*
 Mr. Vasile Bumber, *Mayor, Bistra*
 Mr. Vasile Duiciuc, *Deputy Mayor, Bistra*
 Mr. Ioan Tiplea, *President, Petra Community Forest Association*
 Mr. Georghe Rednic, *Member, Petra Community Forest Association*
 Mr. Dmitru Pascu, *Member, Petra Community Forest Association*
 Mr. Vasile Ciolpan, *Mayor, Vişeu de Sus*
 Mr. Ludowig Barany, *Deputy Mayor, Vişeu de Sus*
 Mr. Michael Schneeberger, *Hilfe für die Wassertalbahn*

Baia Mare, Romania

Mr. Viorel Iancu, *Director, Baia Mare Office, Environmental Protection Agency*
 Ms. Delia Ruzsa, *Superior Councilor, Department of Regional Development, Maramureş County Council*
 Mr. Dorin Buda, *Deputy Council President, Maramureş County Council*
 Mr. Iuliu Szekely, *Director of Area Somes – Tisza, Romanian Waters Authority, Baia Mare*
 Ms. Simona Eftimie, *Head of Chemistry Laboratory, Romanian Waters Authority, Baia Mare*

F. Annex 6: Evaluation Field Visit Schedule

| Date | Activity |
|---------------------------|---|
| Monday, July 27 | Meeting with NFA in Bucharest, travel to Baia Mare |
| Tuesday, July 28 | Travel to MMNP with project manager, visit relevant sites in MMNP |
| Wednesday, July 29 | Interviews with local stakeholders in MMNP, travel to Baia Mare |
| Thursday, July 30 | Interviews with regional stakeholders in Baia Mare, return to Bucharest |
| Friday, July 31 | Meetings with national level stakeholders, debriefing with UNDP |

G. Annex 7: Maramureş Nature Park PIR Summary with Indicators and Level of Achievement

| Project Objective and Outcomes | Description of Indicator | Baseline Level | Target Level | Level at 30 June 2006 | Level at 30 June 2007 | Level at 30 June 2008 | Level at 30 June 2009 |
|---|--|----------------|-----------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Objective: The biodiversity of Maramureş Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by demonstrating an effective PA management model. | 1. # ha under strict conservation management. | 0 | 7,800 | 12,500 – Government has decided already to extend strict protection status to 12,500 ha and this may be increased further. | 12,500; May likely increase due to finalized management plan. | 12,500 in place since 2007. To date the total surface is 18,769 ha foreseen in the management plan and approved by the Scientific Council of the Park. | To date- the total surface is 18,769 ha foreseen in the management plan and approved by the Scientific Council of the Park. |
| | 2. # ha under improved PA management. | 0 | 148,500 ¹⁴ | 27,500 ha (12,500 strictly protected habitat + 15,000 ha of forest in the Park has declared protected forest) | 148,500 ha. Special management of sub-units of the park is underway: 27,500 ha – 12,500 strictly protected habitat +15,000 ha of forest in the Park has declared protected forest. The management plan underway. | 133,354 ha to date. (In 2005 the total Park area was estimated to 150,000 ha; later on, using the existing baseline information and maps at the time of Park designation, a surface covering 148,500 ha was determined as being under improved management; during 2007-2008, processing of biodiversity baseline survey and GIS data processing gave a more accurate delimitation of the total area under improved management that is 133,354 ha). | 133,354 ha |
| | 3. Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) score. | 19 | 28 | 26 | 56 | 62 | 70 |
| | 4. Indicator species maintained at the | | | | [Not completed] | [Not completed] | [Not completed] |

¹⁴ The Project Document figure of 150,000 was an estimate. But the mapping of the area during the project's first year gave the exact figure of 148,500. This has been further revised through GIS to the current exact figure of 133,354 ha.

| Project Objective and Outcomes | Description of Indicator | Baseline Level | Target Level | Level at 30 June 2006 | Level at 30 June 2007 | Level at 30 June 2008 | Level at 30 June 2009 |
|--|--|--|---|---|-----------------------|--|--|
| | baseline level: - <i>Ursus arctus</i> (bear) - <i>Canis lupus</i> (wolf) - <i>Tetrao urogalus</i> (grouse/caper kelly) - <i>Pinus mugo</i> (mountain pine) | 84 individuals 61 individuals 294 individuals 2100 ha | Maintained at least at the baseline level | 84 individuals 61 individuals 294 individuals 2100 ha | | | |
| Outcome 1: Stakeholders make Maramureş Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational | 4. Number of staff on NFA payroll for MMNP | 0 | 16 | 4 | 9 | 11 | 8 staff The number has temporarily decreased due to internal NFA reprofiling; however, in short time the number of staff will be completed with new hiring (2 office staff and 2 rangers). |
| | 5. MMNP achieves national PA designation, is gazetted and boundaries clearly marked on maps and on the ground. | No, No, No | Yes, Yes, Yes | Yes, Yes, No | Yes, Yes, Yes | Yes, Yes, Yes | Yes, Yes, Yes |
| | 6. NFA fully funds MMNP staff costs and partial operating costs during project. | \$0/yr | \$70,000/yr | \$40,500/yr – [staff costs: 34,500] [operational costs: 6,000] | \$70,000/yr | \$80,000/yr | US\$ 145,000 /yr |
| | 7. # of PA that have utilized training modules developed by Maramureş team & international/national consultants during the implementation of the project | 0 | 5 PAs by EoY 5. | 0 | 0 | Training module in conservation biology for Protected Areas Administration staff developed. The training module will be shared with other PAs across the national PAs network by mid 2009. | Training Needs Assessment study completed; Training module for park staff completed. The project through the Park administration, has successfully replicated this training module by including it in a new application in partnership with the County Council. The application is submitted for funding under EU |

| Project Objective and Outcomes | Description of Indicator | Baseline Level | Target Level | Level at 30 June 2006 | Level at 30 June 2007 | Level at 30 June 2008 | Level at 30 June 2009 |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| | | | | | | | funds and the training module will be delivered to other 32 protected areas in Maramureş county. |
| Outcome 2: Stakeholders Strengthen Environmental Governance Across Maramureş | 8. New joint development review mechanism involving County Council and MMNP meeting quarterly. | No mechanism | Quarterly meetings held since 2007. | County Council agrees to consult MMNP in development review. Mechanism under development. | Mechanism is functioning; EPA withholds approval of new development application until the Park has approved same. | The mechanism is in place and functional Park staff is invited to the quarterly regular meetings of the county council, EPA and prefecture. Besides these meetings, representatives of other main stakeholders (such as town halls and forestry districts) have been largely involved in the management planning process of the Park. | Besides the quarterly meetings a voluntary mechanisms that involves the Park has developed: Following a legislative amendment of the PAs legislation, the PAs administrations are no longer required to issue permits for the economic development activities in within their area; this poses the risk of an uncontrolled development inside the protected areas. The voluntary mechanism consist of two aspects: (i) due to the good support of local authorities secured by the Park and the level of awareness that the Park managed to inculcate, a voluntary mechanism is in place whereby the local county council is consulting the Park administration in case of each local development initiative. (ii) local authorities are recognizing Park expertise; the Park is included in the technical commission that issues permits for all the local development initiatives |
| | 9. Conservation and architectural guidelines are/are not incorporated into development review process. | No towns/ villages with guidelines incorporated into urban planning process. | 10 towns / villages incorporate guidelines. | 0 | Guidelines for traditional building / construction under development for adoption and replication by County Council and Architect's Order of Maramureş . | Guidelines for traditional buildings / construction are approved and mandatory for three municipalities (Vişeu de Jos, Petrova, Vişeu de Sus); for the rest of the settlements the local development plans are currently under work and will be submitted to the Park administration for | 5 municipalities Other two municipalities had their local development plans approved (Ruscova and Bistra); the remaining 5 municipalities within the Park boundaries are currently working on their development plans and will be submitting them for the Park approval; basically all 10 municipalities in the Park are already incorporating the local traditional architectural guidelines in their development plans. |

| Project Objective and Outcomes | Description of Indicator | Baseline Level | Target Level | Level at 30 June 2006 | Level at 30 June 2007 | Level at 30 June 2008 | Level at 30 June 2009 |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| | 10. Reduced volume of sawdust in Vaser, Ruscova and Vişeu River riparian zones. | 100 sawdust dump sites in riparian zone; | 60 sawdust dump sites in the riparian zone. | 100 sawdust dump sites in riparian zone. | 96; 16 large sites (approx. 200 m ²) and 80 small sites (approx 30 m ²) | approval. The large dump sites were removed; to date only 60 small sites (approx 30 m ²) are still observed on riparian areas. The remaining saw dust dump sites will continue to decrease due to foreign investment in saw dust processing, following the pilot demonstration sponsored by the project. The initial pilot investment in saw dust briquettes production sponsored by the project, raised the interest of another private company to invest in a large local saw dust processing line. As a result, wood waste from most of the wood processing factories is feeding the new production line, based on mutual advantageous contracts. | Less than 30 dump sites Currently there are less than 30 sawdust dump sites that are not suitable for use (i.e. wet sawdust in full process of decay) the recently accumulated sawdust and wood waste is being collected by Italian and Hungarian companies. Therefore, no wood/sawdust waste is being deposited. A new initiative, a consortium in which the County Council is party – interreg iv – have chosen Maramureş area as pilot area for sustainable use of biomass as a renewable source of energy. |
| | 11. Park Admin's approval required for any land-use change outside urban area inside MMNP. | Is not required . | Is required by law by EoY 2. | Law #265 approved in July 2006 | Law on Protected Areas #345 approved in 2006. At the time of last year's PIR Law 265 was published and valid. A month later, | Gov. Ord. 57/2007 issued at 29.06.2007 is empowering the Park to issue approvals for any land-use change inside and outside the park; the law however prohibits any land-use changes in the strictly protected areas and sustainable | Following a legislative amendment of the PAs legislation, the PAs administrations are no longer required to issue permits for the economic development activities in within their area; this poses the risk of an uncontrolled development inside the protected areas; Irrespectively, due to the good local authorities support secured by the Park and the level of awareness |

| Project Objective and Outcomes | Description of Indicator | Baseline Level | Target Level | Level at 30 June 2006 | Level at 30 June 2007 | Level at 30 June 2008 | Level at 30 June 2009 |
|--|--|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|--|---|---|
| | | | | | Law 345 on protected areas was adopted. On 29.06.2007, Gov. Ord. 57 / 2007 was issued – and this has to be also mentioned in this PIR. | management area (buffer zones). | that the Park managed to inculcate, a voluntary mechanism is in place whereby the local county council is consulting the Park administration in case of each local development initiative. Furthermore, local authorities are recognizing Park expertise; the Park is included in the technical commission that issues permits for all the local development initiatives |
| Outcome 3: Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation. | 12. Hectares of certified forest with biodiversity criteria incorporated. | 0 | 30,000 ha | 0 | 0 | NFA has started the certification process of the state owned forest areas; in MMNP 15,000 ha in upper Vaser Valley will be certified by the end of 2008; Risk is still critical as the process is beyond the control of the project or UNDP CO. | # of ha The situation has not changed during the last reporting year. The land restitution claims are not fully settled yet; NFA will certify the state forests at national level, which is beyond project control; the project, however, has raised awareness among forest private owners and wood processors on the benefits of certification. As a result, a local wood processing company made aware by the project of the benefits of certification and certified wood products (which is processing approx. 60,000 m ³ per year from 30,000 ha certified management surface)- is now certifying the chain of custody and this is stimulating the forest market and implicitly the certification of the forest management (i.e. management is according to environmental, social and sustainable standards). |
| | 13. Volume of wood waste consumed annually by biomass boilers in municipal heating demonstrations. | 0 | 150 tons/yr | 0 | 200/tons in winter of 2006/2007 | 160 tons/year in winter of 2007-2008 | 3160 tons/yr 160t/yr (the large Italian company) and approx. 3000 t/yr of wood waste (saw dust included; from the company who decided to certify its chain of custody) |

| Project Objective and Outcomes | Description of Indicator | Baseline Level | Target Level | Level at 30 June 2006 | Level at 30 June 2007 | Level at 30 June 2008 | Level at 30 June 2009 |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------|--|---|--|---|--|
| | 14. # of eco-tourists visiting the Park/yr grows steadily through the project period. | 2,000 | 5,000 | 3,000 | 3,000 (2006 figure) | 8000 | 10,000 |
| | 15. Total economic value of MMNP ecosystem services estimated, taught to other PA managers and recognized by local authorities. | Not valued. | Study itself; b) Training module; c) County Council declaration or motion (official declaration or minutes from CC meeting). | Not yet valued. TEV study not yet done. | Not yet valued. TEV study in progress and to be finished Oct 2007. | PES/TEV study finished and results shared with at least protected areas from the NFA managed PAs network. Lack of funding to carry out a similar exercise is the main cause preventing other PAs to replicate this good practice. | No changes in sharing/replication at the PA network managed by NFA; the PES/TEV study was however conducted in another GEF funded project site in Romania, namely Macin Mountains National Park; (lack of funding continues to prevent replication in other PAs); WWF is currently conducting an economic valuation of natural resources, in the two Carpathian protected areas "Slovensky Raj National Park" (Slovakia) and "Tatra National Park" (Poland), following the PES/TEV study conducted in Maramureş park in 2007; WWF initiative will also build upon the PES/TEV study and further develop practical recommendations linked to a "payments for environmental services" (PES) concept, - included in a regional development plan that covers "Maramureş Mountains Nature Park" (Romania) and the surrounding area. |

Ratings of Project Progress towards Meeting Objective

| | 2006 Rating (from 06 PIR if available) | 2007 Rating (from 07 PIR) | 2008 Rating | 2009 Rating |
|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| National Project Manager/Coordinator | S | S | HS | HS |
| UNDP Country Office | S | S | HS | HS |
| UNDP Regional Technical Advisor | S | S-HS | HS | HS |

Ratings of Project Implementation

| | 2006 Rating (from 06 PIR if available) | 2007 Rating (from 07 PIR) | 2008 Rating | 2009 Rating |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| National Project Manager/Coordinator | S | S | HS | HS |
| UNDP Country Office | S | S | HS | HS |
| UNDP Regional Technical Advisor | S | S-HS | HS | HS |

H. Annex 8: Maramureş Logframe Summary with Assessed Level of Achievement

| Objective/Outcomes | Performance Indicators | Baseline | Target Goal | Adaptive Management | Actual Level of Achievement |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| The biodiversity of Maramureş Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by demonstrating an effective PA management model. | <p>Hectares of forest under certification with biodiversity criteria incorporated.</p> <p>Volume of wood waste disposed of properly and/or consumed by biomass boilers in municipal heating demonstrations.</p> <p>Hectares under strict conservation management.</p> <p>Hectares under improved protected area management.</p> <p>Level of diversity within Maramureş forest ecosystem.</p> <p>Number and condition of populations of rare species of NTFP</p> <p>Replication: 2 new training modules developed and applied in NFA PA training program. # of PA trainees using training modules by year 4. Best practice note for biomass heat program development and funding. # of municipalities pursuing biomass heat options.</p> | <p>Zero hectares.</p> <p>Zero tones.</p> <p>0 ha currently.</p> <p>0 ha in Maramureş under long-term PA management.</p> <p>TBD in year 1.</p> <p>TBD in year 1.</p> <p>No training modules.</p> <p>Zero staff.</p> <p>No note or guidelines. No municipalities pursuing biomass heating.</p> | <p>50,000 ha by year 4.</p> <p>At least 2,500 tons/year by 2; 5,000 tons/year by 4.</p> <p>7,800 ha by year 4.</p> <p>150,000 ha by year 3.</p> <p>Unchanged or increased (uc/ic) in project area by year 4.</p> <p>Uc/ic in project area by year 4.</p> <p>Training modules applied.</p> <p>20 staff utilize them by yr 3.</p> <p>Note published and on web by year 3.</p> <p>At least 3 more municipalities pursuing by year 4.</p> | <p>2008 PIR identifies target level as 30,000 ha. Following MTE< certification target and activities changed to focus on awareness building (but the target was not taken out of the logframe/PIR), with new indicator of “# of private forest landowners introduced to the potential benefits of certified forestry” and a target of “at least 15 by EoP.”</p> <p>2008 PIR identifies target level of wood waste disposal as 150 tons/yr.</p> <p>Actual PA area was determined through GIS data and ground-truthing to be 133,354 ha. The initial PA boundaries were done in an office on a map with a 1:50,000 scale, and thus were not very accurate.</p> <p>“Level of diversity” indicator not reported on after 2006 PIR.</p> <p>“Number and condition of populations of rare species of NTFP” indicator not reported on.</p> <p>Best practice note not reported on in PIR.</p> <p>Number of municipalities pursuing biomass heat options not reported on in PIR.</p> | <p>The original project certification goals were derailed by the national land restitution process, which is ongoing. The certification objectives of the project were modified following the mid-term evaluation. Without land-tenure certainty, the NFA is unwilling to invest in certification. It is estimated that 30,000 ha within MMNP will be retained by the NFA, and thus eventually certified.</p> <p>160 tons/year of wood waste disposed of in biomass boilers, plus 3,000 used by certified chain of custody local processing company. The original target of 5,000 tons by year 4 was obviated by the fact that the market for wood waste use in particle board expanded, so it was not necessary or cost-effective to reduce the volume of wood waste by using it in boilers for heating.</p> <p>The core strictly protected area under protection since 2007 is 12,500 ha, exceeding the target. The total area proposed in the revised management plan, which is still to be approved at the national level, is 18,769 ha.</p> <p>133,354 ha under improved management. The recognized area of the park was corrected using GIS data.</p> <p>Training module in conservation biology for PA administration staff developed. The module has yet to be shared with other PAs across national network. This activity is proposed to be included in the recent project proposal for EU SOP funds.</p> |
| Outcome 1. Stakeholders make Maramureş Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational. | <p>MMNP achieves national PA designation by Romanian Parliament.</p> <p>Number of staff on NFA payroll for MMNP.</p> <p>MMNP premises in use/not in use.</p> <p>Staff knowledge in relevant areas of importance for MMNP.</p> | <p>Not submitted</p> <p>Zero</p> <p>Not in use.</p> <p>TBD prior to training</p> | <p>Designated by yr 3.</p> <p>5 by yr 1 and 10 by yr 2</p> <p>In use by EoY 1.</p> <p>Increase in test score by 30%</p> | <p>PIR identifies target level at 16 staff.</p> <p>Percent change in awareness / knowledge of targeted school groups not reported on.</p> <p>Status of database not reported on.</p> | <p>MMNP designated, gazetted, and has boundaries clearly marked on maps.</p> <p>Number of staff on MMNP NFA payroll at 11 by 2008.</p> <p>MMNP headquarters building in Viseau de sus is renovated and in use. Additional renovation work ongoing to develop learning center in top floor.</p> <p>Staff knowledge in relevant areas of important for</p> |

| Objective/Outcomes | Performance Indicators | Baseline | Target Goal | Adaptive Management | Actual Level of Achievement |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| | <p>MMNP admin and management is/is not functional.</p> <p>NFA does/does not fully fund MMNP operating and staff costs.</p> <p>MMNP is/is not gazetted and boundary is/is not clearly marked on maps or on the ground.</p> <p>% change in awareness/knowledge of targeted school groups.</p> <p>Presence/absence of computer database with full baseline data installed.</p> <p>MMNP does/does not financially support monitoring costs.</p> <p>Replication: MMNP establishes new entrance fee based upon willingness to pay study. At least 2 other PAs do the same.</p> <p>Replication: At least two training modules utilized in NFA national PA training program to train at least 20 PA staff.</p> <p>Replication: Website for knowledge network has 100 hits/month from PA staff in Romania.</p> <p>Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) score</p> | <p>Not functional.</p> <p>Zero</p> <p>Not gazetted; Not clearly marked</p> <p>Unknown – TBD at project launch</p> <p>Outdated paper files.</p> <p>Project to support for first 3 years.</p> <p>There is no baseline fee and no understanding of willingness to pay studies. No new training modules.</p> <p>Not knowledge network.</p> <p>X (TBD at project inception)</p> | <p>Is functional by EoY 1</p> <p>\$70,000-\$90,000 /year disbursed beginning in yr 1.</p> <p>Is gazetted by EoY 3; Is clearly marked.</p> <p>30% up by EoY 3.</p> <p>Computer data-base by EoY 3.</p> <p>MMNP to support by EoY 3.</p> <p>Entrance fee applied by year 2 in MMNP and in 2 other PAs by year 3.</p> <p>2 new modules incorporated and applied by year 2.</p> <p>Network and website estab by yr 3.</p> <p>X + 20% by mid term; X + 40% by project end.</p> | <p>Monitoring costs not reported on.</p> <p>MMNP decided not to pursue entrance fee model due to inability to control access to MMNP.</p> <p>Baseline was determined to be 19. Target value increased to 66 (baseline + 250%) in mid-term adaptive management report.</p> | <p>MMNP is not specifically reported on, but is demonstrated to be high, and staff have completed training.</p> <p>MMNP admin and management is functional.</p> <p>NFA fully funds staff costs; in 2009 the level was budgeted at \$145,000/yr, though because of the national financial situation the management team does not expect to receive more than \$100,000.</p> <p>Change in awareness of school groups not reported on.</p> <p>Financial and biological databases in existence with 2007 baseline data; biological database requires further work to increase utility.</p> <p>MMNP is not currently able to support a consistent / comprehensive biological monitoring program. Monitoring currently done on an ad-hoc basis by rangers on patrol.</p> <p>MMNP in process of identifying revenue opportunities in lieu of entrance fee.</p> <p>The training module that was developed has yet to be shared with other PAs across national network. This activity is proposed to be included in the recent project proposal for EU SOP funds.</p> <p>MMNP operates a website, which does not include a specific knowledge network for Romanian PA staff, but does highlight some MMNP experiences. Website received on average 966 visitors per month (from March – July 2009, the months for which complete data was available), but unknown where these visitors are located.</p> <p>MMNP METT score was 70 in 2009, exceeding both the original target and the revised target value of 66.</p> |
| Outcome 2. Stakeholders Strengthen Environmental Governance Across Maramureş | <p>Local admin and FD do/do not endorse analysis/report on forest management options.</p> <p>Report publicized in local and national newspapers.</p> <p>FD does/does not approve landscape-scale conservation plan.</p> | <p>Does not exist</p> <p>Not published</p> <p>Does not exist.</p> | <p>Endorsed EoY 2.</p> <p>Published in 1 local, 1 national paper. Approved by EoY 2.</p> <p>Approved by EoY 2.</p> | <p>Specific indicators not reported on.</p> | <p>The revised MMNP management plan, including the zoning system, was developed through a participatory process with the approval of relevant county and local authorities.</p> <p>The review mechanism for regional development planning includes the park administration.</p> <p>Guidelines for traditional building and construction</p> |

| Objective/Outcomes | Performance Indicators | Baseline | Target Goal | Adaptive Management | Actual Level of Achievement |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| | Maramureş Municipality Council approves regional plan and zoning system. Sustainable principles/guidelines are/are not built in all the relevant sectoral plans and programs. Level of knowledge re: regional planning among development managers in 3 local communities. | Does not exist. Are not. Baseline TBD in first 6 months. | Are incorporated in 2 programs by EoY 3. Increase in level of knowledge by 50% by EoY 3. | | have been approved and are mandatory for three municipalities. |
| Outcome 3. Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation. | Main stakeholder institutions do/do not incorporate new valuations of PAs, and other conservation economy ideas/goods, services into strategies and programs. Natural capital center is/is not operational in Maramureş. Change in level of usage of the center. Participation in trade fairs increases annually. Wood waste energy demonstration is/is not operational. Volume of sawdust diverted to energy demonstration. Percentage of wood waste disposed of in proper waste management areas. Measured reduction or not in sawdust waste in streams in two target areas. Replication: Financial and planning best practices on developing successful biomass heating initiatives developed and distributed to 20 municipalities. Eco/cultural tourism grows to be one of the top 3 industries in the project area. | Do not currently. Not operational Visitation level TBD first year. Participation level for first trade fair TBD. Does not exist. Zero Zero; Baseline level TBD yr 1. Baseline TBD in two areas. No best practices exist. Growth percentage in tourism. Is/is not an official a priority. | 2 local economic programs/ strategies by EoY 3. Is operational by EoY 1. Increase by 40% by EoY 4. Increase by 30% by end of year 4. 1 operational by EoY 2 & 2 by EoY 3. 200 tons/ month by EoY 2. At least 25% by EoY 3. Significant, reduction by EoY 3. Practice note exists; at least 3 municipalities pursuing option by year 4. Enters the top 3 by year 4. Official priority by EoY 4. | Visitor usage not specifically reported on / data not collected. Data on trade fair participation not reported on. Volume of sawdust diverted to energy production not reported on. Adaptive management report indicates baseline of 100 dump sites, with target of reduction to 60 by EoP. Percentage of total wood waste disposed of properly (through biomass heating boilers) not reported on. Information on dissemination of biomass heating initiatives not specifically reported on. Financial figures for tourism industry in project area estimated in TEV, but relative growth rate not reported on. Adaptive management report includes indicator of number of tourists, with a baseline of zero, a mid-term target of 4,000 and EoP target of 5,000. | The TEV study was completed and shared with local stakeholders. Two municipalities entered into contracts for carbon sequestration with a private sector company, though these contracts did not prove durable. Potential for similar financial arrangements in the future. Natural capital center was not fully operational by end of project, but will be completed by end-2009. Wood waste energy demonstration was completed, and led to additional investment by third-parties. Approximately 150 – 160 tons/yr of wood waste used in biomass heating. Sawdust waste has been measurably reduced, though exact figures are not available. Large dump sites have been removed, and approximately 60 small sites (30 m2) remain in riparian areas. According to project reporting, the remaining sites will continue to decrease due to foreign investment in saw dust processing following the pilot demonstration. Financial and planning best practices for biomass heating initiatives developed and shared with 11 municipalities of MMNP. Eco- and cultural tourism do not yet appear to be one of the top three industries in MMNP, but figures for all industries are not available. The number of tourists has increased from a baseline of approximately 2,000 to an estimated 10,000 in 2009. This figure would have been higher in 2008 except for the flood in Vaser Valley that destroyed the rail line. |

I. Annex 9: Project Follow-up to Mid-term Evaluation Recommendations

| Mid Term Evaluation Recommendations | Response/Action Taken | Level of Follow-up at Terminal Evaluation |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Develop or revive the tripartite project committee, which should meet regularly (monthly or bimonthly) to discuss project progress. The members should be the Project Manager (MMNP Director), UNDP-CO and NFA-Bucharest. The agenda of the park Director is now evolving and will include more and more activities that are not part of the project delivery but are part of the NFA-Park Administration work plan. Regular meetings will allow the Director to present his team's progress and the work plan for the coming period. It will allow the two major project partners (UNDP and NFA) to review the project progress, to discuss replication opportunities and long-term sustainability of the project achievements and to communicate and exchange views on their respective agendas. It will provide a more integrated management of the project within the MMNP Administration agenda. | Noted. The project will institute a quarterly Tripartite project committee meeting. Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager Expected completion date: 30 January 2008 | Progress updating to UNDP-CO and NFA-Bucharest handled adequately informally. |
| 2. Organize a project management retreat off site in the last part of 2007 to review progress to date and review the plan for the next two years. The project is at its mid-point and it also corresponds to the end of the first phase to establish the MMNP Administration. The park is now officially created, an Administration is in place to manage it, some awareness raising activities were conducted with local communities and local leaders, and an initial study is underway to identify the potential for environmental services in the MMNP area. The next phase will focus mainly on: (i) strengthening the management capacity of the MMNP Administration through the support for the development of a comprehensive management plan and the development of a monitoring system to monitor the biodiversity and the ecosystem conditions of the park; (ii) developing an ecotourism strategy for the area; and, (iii) supporting demonstrations of small-scale activities in the tourism and forestry sectors. | Noted. A management team retreat will be organized. Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager Expected completion date: 30 January 2008 | Completed. |
| 3. The project is currently supporting the biodiversity baseline and a review of the current zoning within the park. It is urgent that this zoning is finalized and clarified. Local communities and local agencies have an understanding of the park as a protected area. However, so far little is known about the different zones in the park and their related different management regimes. For instance, few people seem to know that alpine grazing is allowed in certain parts of the park and that under certain conditions, the cutting of wood is allowed in certain places in the park. Following this review of the management zones, the project should support a "communication tour" throughout the local communities and the local development agencies such as forestry inspectorate, EPA, agriculture, to present this zoning and the related regulations. The preparation of these informative sessions should start in the immediate future. | Noted. A communication Tour will be organized in Spring of 2008. 2008 workplan, Output 1.1, Activity 3. Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager Expected completion date: 15 June 2008 | Park management plan and zoning agreed through participatory process by all stakeholders in Consultative Council. |
| 4. As part of developing the management plan for MMNP and considering the expectation of the Stakeholders – particularly NFA – in term of Stakeholder participation in the management of the park, there is a need to develop a community outreach strategy for MMNP; which could be extended to a national community outreach in the future once most of it will be tested in MMNP. This strategy should | Noted. Work planning process identified target audiences for education and awareness. School children, private forest landowners, | Effective education and awareness activities carried out as planned. There is no limit to the amount of work that |

| Mid Term Evaluation Recommendations | Response/Action Taken | Level of Follow-up at Terminal Evaluation |
|--|--|--|
| be part of the management plan for MMNP. | local authorities. Practical outreach strategy to be developed and implemented. (2008 work-plan Output 1.2.) Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager Expected completion date: 30 September 2008 | could be carried out in this area. Park staff currently lacking an outreach officer. |
| 5. The main channel of communication with the local communities is currently planned through the consultative council of the MMNP Administration (54 members representing a broad spectrum of society in the area). After some direct informative sessions conducted within the local communities by the project, it is now planned to channel the communication and education activities through this Council. This approach is good and rationale in the long-term: it is not enough in the near term. More awareness activities are needed; particularly more activities in direct contact with local communities (see #3 above). Opportunities exist in each community to discuss various topics; using these networks will facilitate the preparation of these sessions. | The team recognizes additional opportunities exist and as part of its work under the 2008 work-plan (Output 1.2), will pursue these under the planned stakeholder outreach strategy for target stakeholder groups. Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager Expected completion date: 30 September 2008 | See previous. |
| 6. The project should support the MMNP Administration to strengthen its management systems including its management information system and GIS and its human resource management system – including job descriptions and related performance targets –complying with NFA guidelines. Activities supported by the project already took place in this area but the MMNP is now entering a new phase with NFA strengthening its park administrations (22). For instance each Administration is now required to produce a work plan. This process is somehow similar to the project work plan but more comprehensive and encompassing activities that are not directly supported by the project. A capacity assessment of the MMNP Administration is recommended. It would include a functional analysis, an assessment of the existing capacity and the required capacity, an identification of the prioritized capacity gaps/needs and an action plan. | Noted. Capacity and training needs assessment done. Follow up plan drafted. (under 2008 workplan Output 1.1, Activity 1) Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager Expected completion date: March 2008 | Capacity needs assessment and training modules completed. Human resources remain a priority area for the park administration. |
| 7. Based on the review of the project performance indicators, it is recommended the following: a. Outcome 1 is to support the preparation of a Management Plan (MP) and also to develop management instruments for the Administration such as a biodiversity/ecosystem baseline, a monitoring system and a GIS. One indicator should measure the progress in this area such as “A Management Plan in place integrating a biodiversity baseline and monitoring system as well as spatial information (GIS) and responding to the NFA MP guidelines with adequate capacity at the MMNP Administration”; b. Only indicator #8 measures the replication of the training modules. Considering that this aspect (replication) is one critical success factor of this project, it is recommended to | 7a) Rather than change the logframe at this stage, the project team has incorporated this suggested indicator as its “Year 3 Target” for Output 1.1. 2008 work-plan. 7b) The new work plan details “Output 1.6: replication of project results and experiences.” Rather | Addressed, as noted. Note: The indicator recommended by the mid-term evaluation in item 7.c. does not meet guidelines for a quality indicator, though the objective of the point is valid. |

| Mid Term Evaluation Recommendations | Response/Action Taken | Level of Follow-up at Terminal Evaluation |
|--|--|--|
| <p>modify the indicator #8 to encompass all replication activities; such as <i>"Number of project achievements that are replicated in other protected areas in Romania and abroad"</i>.</p> <p>c. The list of indicators does not include any indicator to measure the awareness level of local communities living in the park. It is recommended to add one such as <i>"Local communities understand better the MMNP and started to conserve and use it sustainably"</i>;</p> | <p>than change the log frame at this point, the project team inserted the MTE proposed wording as a "Year 3 Target" for Output 1.5.</p> <p>7c) The new work plan includes these measures of awareness as "Year 3 Targets" for Output 1.2:</p> <p>Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager</p> | |
| <p>8. The project is using the METT to track the management effectiveness of the MMNP. A first assessment was done in 2005 (project inception) and the total score for the project was 19 points (out of a maximum of 96). A second assessment was done in 2007 (mid-way) and the total score was 56. At inception the management team set a target score of only 28 by the end of the project. It is recommended to set new realistic targets for each indicator by the end of the project. It will provide the project management team with the management areas that need attention.</p> | <p>The new METT score target set in the log frame is 66.</p> | <p>Completed. However, the setting of METT targets remains arbitrary. The project team should examine the METT for areas that need improvement, identify achievable targets for each specific item, and then aggregate the target values to determine an appropriate overall target.</p> |
| <p>9. The project publishes a quarterly newsletter to highlight some project activities. This is a good vehicle to disseminate information about the park. The circulation of this newsletter should be extended to all communities through schools, churches and city hall and other opportunities. It is a good vehicle to communicate the different zones of the park and their related management regimes and also to report back to the communities how good the park is protected by reporting the infractions of the past quarter.</p> | <p>Noted. Under 2008 workplan, Output 1.2, Activity 6.</p> <p>Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager</p> | <p>Addressed.</p> |
| <p>10. The project already supported exchanges for the management team to visit other protected areas. It is recommended that more should be done and linked with the work plan for the next two years. Study tour themes could be park monitoring (indicators and system) – including the development of a volunteer monitoring system such as the one in place in the North Vzdeme Biosphere Reserve (NVBR) in Latvia applying an EcoWatch approach; enforcement in protected areas; comprehensive management plan and its application; and, sustainable economic activities in or near a protected area such as ecotourism and sustainable forest exploitation.</p> | <p>Importance of the study tours acknowledged. The project implementation team will explore the feasibility of the organization of other study tours with due consideration to GEF project management guidelines.</p> <p>Responsible manager: UNDP Head of Energy and Environment Section</p> <p>Expected completion date: 30 May 2008</p> | <p>Completed. Study tour conducted with commune mayors to Austria and Slovenia to learn about integration of protected area management and local government administration, as well as ecotourism potential.</p> |
| <p>11. A tourism master plan was done in 2006. It names Maramureş as one of 6 important areas for the development of tourism. A set of actions is identified and a few of those</p> | <p>11a) The project will consult with the Min of Tourism and</p> | <p>Addressed, as noted. As with community</p> |

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| <p>are related to the project objective in the area of ecotourism. Additionally, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) is interested in developing a tourism regional strategy (which is action #36) for Maramureş. Considering this national context, it is recommended that the project consider the following:</p> <p>a. The tourism activity should be done on close collaboration with the MoT. The MoT is interested in supporting the development of a regional tourism strategy for Maramureş, including the possibility of co-financing;</p> <p>b. It is recommended to conduct first an environment, social and economic assessment of the local situation– possibly with a research institute – to support strategy development;</p> <p>c. Ecotourism strategy: one main component should be the development of a tourism destination marketing strategy. The project should focus on supporting the development of Maramureş as a destination and in parallel continue to support some demonstrations (small projects) such as the refurbishing of a wagon in partnership with EcoTours Ltd, an NGO/private company operating a steam train in the Vaser River area for tourists;</p> <p>d. The project has now a role of leading the development process in the MMNP area. It has the “green light” to do this and should use its recognition by the main local development partners to set-up the necessary committees for the development of this strategy; using the Prefecture as a key partner to move the process, the County Council and its team of 5 people focusing on the development of the local tourism as well as local private operators such as EcoTours Ltd;</p> <p>e. The development of this ecotourism strategy should also be coordinated with the development of the MMNP management plan. Ecotourism is part of the strategies to manage these protected areas and should be incorporated in the management plan.</p> | <p>collaborate with them as closely as possible. See Output 3.3. This will also be included in the tourism expert’s ToR.</p> <p>11b) Ecotourism strategizing can build upon the data collected by the environment economist’ TEV study; This will also be included in the tourism expert’s ToR.</p> <p>11c) Noted. This will also be included in the tourism expert’s ToR.</p> <p>11d) Noted. Park Director to undertake this prior to tourism expert’s visit. This will also be included in the tourism expert’s ToR.</p> <p>11e). Noted. Incorporated into Output 1.1, Activity 2.</p> <p>Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager</p> <p>Expected completion date: 15 October 2008</p> | <p>outreach, there remains significant potential opportunity for further work on tourism. The park manager astutely notes that due to the number of residents in the area, tourism cannot be counted on to fully support the local economy. At the same time, there is significant potential economic upside to the further development of tourism resources in the region, and given the declines in the mining and timber industries, economic diversification would greatly benefit local communities.</p> |
| <p>12. After two years, the project starts to accumulate some best practices and lessons learned. It is time to start a process for collecting them, packaging them and disseminating them in Romania and also in the region and worldwide. The use of the MMNP web site to post them is the first recommended step; publications and possible presentations to related forums are recommended such as national and regional conferences/seminars.</p> | <p>Noted. This input has been incorporated into 2008 workplan, Output 1.5. , Activities 1-4.</p> <p>Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager</p> <p>Expected completion date: 15 October 2008</p> | <p>Partially addressed through ongoing monitoring and reporting procedures.</p> |
| <p>13. Support a greater involvement of the scientific community in the MMNP; particularly with a focus on the impact of management practices on the biodiversity. This additional research should be undertaken with the involvement of the MMNP Scientific Council and the MMNP Administration and address existing issues. The results will help MMNP to make better-informed decision and they should also be made public through the MMNP web site and other research results dissemination schemes such as academic journals.</p> | <p>Noted. The Park will work closely with the scientific community especially after the finalization of its management plan in Spring 08, and identification of its priority species and habitats that will be priority research and monitoring targets.</p> | <p>Ongoing. Ad-hoc research is conducted by external scientists who apply for access to the park. The park grants permission based on an agreement that research data will be shared with the park administration</p> |

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| | <p>Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager</p> <p>Expected completion date: On-going</p> | at no-cost. Significant future potential for this type of activity. If the park administration can find the resources, another comprehensive biodiversity inventory would be extremely useful. |
| <p>14. Adapt the approach to implement the output 3.4 "Certified Forest Production and Marketing Demonstration" according to the national development regarding the land restitution process. The project is to deliver some outputs in this area. However, the last Law on land restitution (274/2005) halted the certification process of public forests until all land claims are settled. Instead of stopping all project-supported activities, it is recommended that some sensitization activities be conducted with private forest owners; emphasizing the benefits of the certification scheme. The project should also focus on the distribution channels in the Maramureş area to identify opportunities with certified forest products buyer groups in Romania and elsewhere in Europe; partnering with WWF-Romania and their chain-of-custody certification mechanism. The development of a demand for certified forest products should create a greater interest among forest owners to get their forest certified.</p> | <p>Noted. The logical framework indicator has been removed regarding certified forests as a result of the new developments in Romania regarding land restitution and forest certification. The new activities in response to this recommendation are included under the 2008 workplan, Output 3.4, Activity 1</p> <p>Responsible manager: UNDP-GEF project manager</p> <p>Expected completion date: 31 August 2008</p> | <p>Project focus on certification was re-oriented as described. Activities to increase awareness of local stakeholders regarding certification were carried out. Much work remains to address the demand side of the market, and distribution channels.</p> |

J. Annex 10: Evaluation Documentation

Project team members and evaluator



K. Annex 11: Evaluator Curriculum Vitae

See following pages.

L. Annex 12: Management Response (if any)